

The
**BORN
FOOL**

JOHN WALTER BYRD

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BY
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CHAPTER I

THE small spot of sunlight, a perfect circle on the church wall, was itself a little sun. It used to glow there so friendly; and then sometimes it would begin fading, changing, moving slowly along, suddenly to melt and vanish. The child Kirk would remain gazing at the wall, waiting for the small disc of hot sunlight to return and look back at him.

To him this place was very solemn—filled with holiness; and his mother knelt and prayed beside him at times, while he sat still. But on occasions, especially upon Good Friday, his knees had felt a bruised itchiness long before the end of those prayers he tried to understand.

But he loved much to come here with Mary, his sister, and his mother, to listen with secret child's passion to the organ; to watch his elder brother, an acolyte, holding the incense-boat; and when the organ stopped playing he looked for the small circle to come glowing on the wall. The fine shaft of sunlight came through an old bullet-hole high up in the dark crimson-purple window. Turning right round one day, Kirk had discovered it—a dazzling spot. The drifting incense floated through the long fine rod of light, and the motes of the air twinkled in it like the dust of gold in *lapis lazuli*. The brilliant beam seemed to end in the air, and be pointing to the warm spot upon the wall. While the disc of sunlight remained, the child gazed on it and vividly dreamed. He called up oftenest the little troll-man, read of in the worn leather-backed fairy book, and seen in those tiny olden etch-

ings full of the magical, of "once upon a time"—where the wee shepherd-dwarf leaps, doubled up and laughing, into the flock of cloud-sheep that rest reflected far below in the calm lake. Kirk would dream on strangely and deliciously, until the glowing spot slowly changed and moved before it vanished.

Each Sunday, after his mother had received the Holy Sacrament she prayed there, kneeling upright beside him. And now the organ played sweetly, always the same anthem; the blending voices joined in, and filled the child with rapture. The heavenly sound ascended and ascended into the dim height, filling the air with clear echoings.

At these moments of the Eucharistic celebration, profound reverence awakened in the child.

Though he but dimly understood the rite he felt that it was deeply mystical and very holy.

Encompassing himself—surcharging the lofty, shadowy, and beautiful interior of the building—he conceived a host of bright forms: angelic, lovely, invisible: whose golden aureola illumined specially his mother.

The acolyte brought the censer before the altar steps, and on the shortened chains swung the curious vessel rather quickly, that the charcoal might be glowing hot. Of finest brass-work, the turreted vase was ancient in form, Assyrian, less familiar than even the Egyptian. It was like those in the pictures of the Temple—of David in priestly robes—those scenes that dwelt strongly in the child's imagination. The deacon in white vestments turned to the acolyte. He took the censer, now hanging low from the lengthened chains. The celebrant, clothed with gold and scarlet chasuble, slowly turned and faced the kneeling congregation. The scarlet showed in rich folds; it typified the Blood shed for us; the gold, Kirk knew, symbolised Truth, and the white silk showed Purity.

As the deacon moved his hands, Kirk watched the strange lid travel up the chains. Then the acolyte, coming forward, reverently and with both hands presented the incense-boat

to the celebrant, who took up the brazen spoon and four times shook the precious spices upon the cup of charcoal. The white cloud instantly ascended. The lid was lowered by the deacon. And now from him the celebrant took the smoking vessel, to swing it to and fro, then over and over, in measured sweeps before the altar. The growing cloud ascended slowly; the anthem, too, ascended in ecstatic sweet crescendo:

"Incense, and a pure offering, O Lord, to Thee we bring,
And when the cloud covers the mercy-seat,
Look down upon Thy people, and speak peace, speak peace . . ."

The incense filled the whole church with a dim haze and with its own unique scent. This ever was the most sacred time of ministration. Expectantly, the boy of eight years watched his mother as she knelt upright, very graceful and slender—her eyes shut, the long beautiful fingers enlaced on her bosom. The fragile ornaments trembled upon her hat; and then, sometimes—as on to-day—she spoke with a clear thrilling voice, beautifully cadenced; she was gifted with prophecy; it was the Holy Ghost speaking through the chosen one. The sweet *andante* of the organ died almost away that she might be heard. Kirk knew what this was; he had asked his mother many times about these things. He could see the deacon quickly writing down her words. In the still church his mother's beautiful voice came back from the high roof like a silver bell rung low and softly. The fourfold company of ministers sat moveless in the chancel. Kirk also knelt down close beside her, and shut his eyes. Virtue seemed to come from the mother to the child, as he leaned himself a little, gently and reverently, to touch her.

Joyously the Te Deum ended the service. Afterwards, on to-day, as usual, many people spoke quietly with the Clintons, or they smiled and bowed from distant pews. Kirk went home with his mother and his sedate self-possessed little sister. They walked through the delightful sunshine in the wide roads and avenues of Mead Wells. The way was filled

with people returning from other churches. Flashing carriages drawn by prancing horses were going slowly past, and a wonderful number of old ladies were gliding home in Bath-chairs.

Kirk's father was a civil engineer; and in the Apostolic Church he was a lay-evangelist. At this time he was not abroad, and presently he would return home from the vestries. Ted, two years the senior of Kirk, would come with him.

Mrs. Clinton and her two younger children now came to a quiet road. The old and heavy garden walls on either side only now and then showed gates. The houses mostly were hidden by big trees. These grew far out over the secluding walls, and thus deeply shaded the pathways; then, too, there were large trees here and there growing at the edges of the roadway, with flat iron grating round their boles to let the roots be watered. The road curved up, steeper and steeper, till a dark high wood seemed to close the distant end.

Dense growths of lilac, laburnum, acacia, and old hawthorn leaned over these walls in many places; you could smell their fragrance as you walked; and to-day little twirling caterpillars hung down on their gossamer threads and swung into Kirk's face.

The Clintons stopped outside a high and solid double-gate. Kirk, exercising a privilege of which he was jealous, at once stretched up and with gloved hands took hold of the twisted iron ring, made an effort, and opened the smaller gate. "Bencleuch Lodge" in gilded letters was the name on the larger leaf. From inside the gates a long gravel drive that went curving through a delightful seclusion, led to the house. Vistas of lawns and flowers showed beyond the high shrub-beried mounds. A stately cedar tree spread out halfway down the garden, and through this dark mass, and beneath the thick old hawthorns, one caught the gleam of a white French-looking house. A great Burgundy pear tree, unprunable as an elm, rose high near the house and hid all the right-hand gables.

Old, irregular, and very high walls, part of yellow stone, part of old white-jointed red brickwork, enclosed this ancient home and gardens. In many parts these thick and crumbling walls were covered or canopied with deep ivy, and against the sunny spaces were trained apricot and greengage trees, all very neatly spread out and fastened to the walls by dozens of bits of white leather.

The moment Kirk, Mrs. Clinton and her little daughter had entered this place of peace, Mary stopped, shook back her fine jetty curls, put her face up to a rose of an almost velvet-black damask and exclaimed vivaciously—

“Oh, mother! *Do* let us gather father’s rose before the errand boys steal it!”

Mrs. Clinton, smiling a little to herself, gave her pink parasol to Kirk, then gently severed the stalk and put the dark rose in Mary’s shapely little hand.

CHAPTER II

IN these three children—Kirk, his elder brother Ted, and Mary—lived a strong sense of demarcation. Between themselves they had drawn gradually a suzerainty over every tree and mound and every flower-bed and shrubbery. Kirk had settled all the final boundaries; and when their mother knew, she had left things alone, excepting only when dispute arose. The shady summer-house belonged to Mary. It smelt green and woody, and stood beneath the sweeping cedar in a dark angle of the walls, where, unexpectedly, the garden widened. These children were all minutely “on their honour.” Neither boy went in the summer-house without first asking permission of his little sister.

The old damask rose-tree near the gates had been named “Father’s tree”; for errand-boys and others who found themselves unobserved—so far from the house—yearly pillaged the rich blooms, and the children very naïvely had bestowed this rose-tree on their father.

Mary had rights also over two of those tempting mounds, and these were called “Mary’s rockeries.” Really, they were two neighbouring islands of hidden ruddy soil standing up in a sea of smooth lawn, and both were densely grown with Indian currants, old lilacs, small scented beam-trees, cherry-trees, and yellow rhododendrons. But one could not see beneath them for their high, thick borders, for each mound had a rich belt of pampas-grass and purple iris, mandrake and peonies, broom bushes, dwarf white cabbage-roses, and big tiger-lilies that yellowed your nose with pollen when you smelt them.

In summer, after creeping in through the border, to sit quite hidden away in the scented hollow spaces on these

mounds—leaf-roofed and patterned beneath by sunflecks—was halcyon to Kirk. Under the bushes the dry red ground of the mounds was covered with dead needles, fallen from the cedar; and beneath the thick roof of leaves there were such woody smells, and it was so dark and shady and secret. The dead cedar-needles stuck in Kirk's guernsey and stockings. If he turned up a stone the rusty-hued centipedes began running off, and the wood-lice all curled up quickly into little balls. Curled up thus, Kirk had blown them through his pea-shooter at Mary. He said it did not hurt them because they fell in the grass.

Kirk was always setting himself laws, and persuading or impressing the others to conform to them. Mary allowed him to "make mud" in the hole in her summer-house table. This table was really the top of a sycamore trunk, sawn off years ago and now standing up through the middle of the floor. The boards had been cut and fitted round the big trunk where it went down into the ground. In the flat-topped centre a hole had rotted out, and with his knife Kirk had dug it larger. He had ordained to Ted—"No going in at the door except Mary."

So, for weeks, the little brothers went arduously in and out through a very small window—high up, it seemed to them—in the faded blue wooden sides. First they mounted in turn on the topmost of two giant flower-pots that stood inverted one on the other like clowns' hats. Balancing themselves on this pedestal, they reached up for the window bottom, then hauled themselves up, squeezed through, and, with spread feet in the window corners, let themselves down, one outstretched hand on the table beneath, the other grasping a big nail not far down inside. To get back one knelt on the table, walked one's feet heels first up to the window, felt for the nail with one hand, and so shuffled out backwards. The clay-mud, after being mixed to a proper stiffness, was by Kirk made into dozens of queer shapes. As he made them he gave each

a strange name, so strange indeed that by next day he could remember but few: and often he would rename them.

These fantastic part-human-animal-vegetable shapes fascinated Ted and Mary, caused odd surmise in his mother, and mystified his father. Mr. Clinton twice stood and gazed long at them in silence, and went away without speaking. Mary like best the "kindybo," and for her Kirk made many variations. It was a sort of long bull on six legs, and there were certain fixed rules about the form of a true "kindybo." The left-side legs were running backward, the right-side were running forward. It always had a slanting skyward face that smiled idiotically. The two thin horns always pointed straight up. Kirk said that no matter how it moved its head the horns always pointed quite straight up. "Grass-hair" grew down its back, for kindyboes were self-supporting, they lived always on each other's grass-hair. It grew very fast. They ate it from each other's backs at night, walking round and round in pairs—first one way, then the other way. This explained their legs. They used only one set of legs at a time. Kirk was sure he had seen kindyboes—they had come up to his bedside while he lay awake. They were quite black. They had kind faces and seemed "*bo-ish*," and that was why they were called "kindyboes." At night they could easily wade up a strong slope of wind, and they could go through glass when they liked. They were only as big as dachshunds, and their little velvety feet made no noise. They were very kind, and he liked them to come in, but if you moved they went invisible, they were so timid.

All the clay forms when dry were destined to be baked. Cook, however, was often adamant, and made much disappointment of purpose. But when Kirk succeeded he took all the hardened shapes, and with much care and thought distributed them in the garden, in rockeries and trees, in "places they like."

Kirk loved to steal into the high dark shrubbery that overhung the road, to listen to the string band which played

sometimes at evening before going-to-bed-time. When the scented red hawthorns were out and the evening moths fluttered around him in the laburnums and lilac, this music ravished him.

His mother brought from Paris a curious ivory mannikin, whose legs and arms moved about to any posture; it had the quaint shape, the magical form and smile of those wonderful tiny people—Rumpelstiltsken, and the little talismanic dwarfs who loved and cared for Snowdrop. Mrs. Clinton gave it to Kirk. He conceived affection for this small elfin creature, endowed him with life, did not loose him in sleep, carried him about, and on bright summer days set him in the slenderest forks among the blossoms of the great bushes. The child, in his rich imagination, himself also sat in the tree-tops, whispering among the leaves and sunlight, among the highest, lightest, slow-swaying boughs, and the little strange, kind mannikin seemed always to smile back at him as though quite alive. Kirk named him "Tickki."

Fragrant jessamine on green-painted horizontal trellises covered one entire side of the house and surrounded the tall French windows. One morning Kirk had balanced "Tickki" astride a gently inquiring spray of jessamine that see-sawed up and down. In dreamy delight Kirk watched his elf, but slowly turning his face to the open window he met his mother's gaze. Her expression was so full of tenderness that she appeared to him like an angel. For a moment or two he looked back into her eyes with all his power of love; their souls mingled; it was too great for him; he turned and moved on, spellbound and overcome.

Some of the fruit trees were very old, yet they bore abundantly, year after year. The ancient gardener pruned them, and filled the holes in the rough apricot-wood with clay, which dried to a pale yellow-red. Sometimes with slow skill he grafted a rose or two, but mostly old Ned spent his time in the greenhouses, or he was weeding and mowing, attending to the

poultry, or at work in the kitchen garden. A grandson, strange, industrious and silent, helped old Ned.

The many, many beds of this children's paradise were large circles and crescents of old standing; highly mounded, full of annuals and self-seeding flowers. Ned thinned them out a little in the spring and cleared them up in the autumn, but from March to October they remained untouched and free growing. Agnes Clinton taught her children the names of all the flowers, and they knew each one—lupins and columbines, hollyhocks and tiger-lilies, white and red foxgloves, gilly-flowers, and tall yellow moth-mullein that grows wild in the South—but here the numberless spires of moth-mullein bent over a sweet low jungle of mignonette and love-in-a-mist, lush-creeping moneywort, regal carnations, and little groves of clove-scented white pinks.

All the tall flowers and the immense clumps of pampas grass and peonies made charming thickets which filled the great garden with hidden glades, where the child Kirk lurked and dreamed for hours through the rapt moods that often folded him.

But when the wind blew and small bright clouds raced over the azure sky, then great enterprise filled him. He dug tunnels with his knife and trowel, but mostly with his hands; he worked feverishly in the summer-house, or climbed into the lead trough between the wood-house and the stables. There he would hammer vigorously, poke about industriously, and make strong belief he was "engineering," while the small dainty Mary waited below, duly impressed and patient for his return.

All imaginative statements made by the children began with the word "pretend": thus they were not untruthful. The "tend" became with Ted, Kirk, and Mary an unconscious and invariable habit.

Nowhere showed in this garden the naked raked earth—always so crude. Here it was quite covered by a soft growth of lowly green that hid white violets, or by patches and

patches of the grey, old-fashioned woolly-wound-wort, sleek as a hare's foot, and rarely seen in gardens of to-day. The boys often pulled these thick soft leaves to stroke and tickle Mary's cheeks, and even their mother's when they caught her in the girlish humour that so delighted them. Sometimes a tame rabbit, released on the lawns and thoughtlessly unwatched, would disappear for days and quickly grow semi-wild. Quite unawares, forgotten flowers would bloom and be discovered by the children. Never would Kirk forget the sweet changes in the garden each time the family returned after two months spent by the thunderous rolling of the far Welsh shore.

There was a law honourably kept as to fruit. All "wind-falls" were free to those who first found them; but one could not set foot off gravel or grass to get the prize if it lay in a flower-bed. So each child had a kitchen spoon tied to a long stick. This was Kirk's invention; his father had noticed the device, and said to the mother in his terse way—

"The boy's clever!"

On summer mornings, having dressed at a great rate—long before breakfast—out rushed the children. If shoes were not fully laced it was unfair and honour was soiled, but this rarely happened—only once or twice, when Mary, handicapped by a longer toilet, shorter legs, and the wiles of her sex, had been found guilty, warned, and been duly forgiven by "the boys."

Stick-spoons in hand, they raced, eager, shouting and laughing, from tree to tree, while thrushes and blackbirds went hop-hopping off the lawns to hide among the flowers, or they flicked away and dived from sight beneath the stiff box borders. The view hallo came first—a wild rush round. Then the children peered and searched carefully beneath the old box borders—grown higher than the candytufts. Next they sought amid those long and flowery thickets from which rose the red and yellow walls, scooping and reaching for a heavy plum, a wasp-eaten Victoria, a *Magnum bonum*, a luscious

greengage, or perchance a Burgundy pear gone greenish-yellow with a grub-hole in it. In October they found only the immense William pears that fell among the dying strawberry leaves.

The old garden was inexhaustible of experience and joy, and by stealth Kirk did much adventurous climbing in the big trees, where he was quite hidden. Many times he had gathered the purple berries of the Indian currants, to stew them in a "dear little jar," so small a one that his affection was evoked. The dark juice looked rich and smelt very good, but no one could say if it were or were not poisonous. Each time, after a longing hesitation, Kirk emptied the wee jar untasted.

With mother's sanction that the wont was not cruel, they kept some insects in glass jars which they half filled with earth or suitable material for habitat. There was one little patch of soil, warm and dry beside the garden wall, where no flowers grew: this was owing to a green-house furnace in some one's garden over the wall. In this miniature desert made by the heated brickwork, the black ants crowded all day in and out of their holes; but Ted had caught and now kept some of these insects in a jar of dry soil. Kirk early had named the ants when he was almost a baby and on a visit to his grandparents at far-away Tarbock—near the wonderful ships and Eastham oak woods. The black ants were "common daddy-pigs." Then there were "French daddy-pigs"—dark slender green beetles with rusty spots on them—and lastly, "golden daddy-pigs," which were the bright sun-beetles, captured on brilliant days as they ran at speed across the hot drive.

Kirk dearly loved a mystery and a little solitude. He made "secret chambers," and loved to pique the others' curiosity. Kneeling, watching, and poring over the ants in the barren place by the wall, he espied one day a tawny glint of flame inside a deep crevice of the brickwork. This indeed was a

discovery. He ran to the lilac shrubbery, took out a fine straight dead stem from the dense sheaf near the ground, raced back and carefully pushed the dry stem into the crack. He held the twig a few seconds, then drew it forth only half as long, the end glowing red and smelling sweet of burnt wood. Having found Mary and Ted doing their little gardens, the discoverer danced about, crying in a joyous sing-song, "I've—found—some—thing!"

No! no! He would not tell them more. He chose a place on the lawn near the fiery chink, but where they would fail to see it, and made them kneel and close their eyes.

"On your honour?"

"Yes, yes," they both eagerly promised.

He went to the crevice, while they remained faithfully in position, and then running back strategically round several islands of tall flowers, he came before them and cried, "Look!" He waved the glowing twig in bright red circles.

"Oh! I shall tell mother you have matches, Kirk," exclaimed Mary, jumping up and very shocked.

"No, I've not; no, I've not!" laughed Kirk.

"On your honour?" demanded his sister; and was duly satisfied. She was the youngest, but already held herself somewhat responsible for "the boys."

"Kneel again!" cried Kirk.

This time he slipped his shoes off, came up stealthily behind them, and mischievously touched Ted's bare leg with the hot end; then he dodged and dodged and dodged, but tripped himself, and Ted, much heavier, sat astride him.

"All right, I'll show you," bargained Kirk very breathless, and Mary—always his ally—was pulling at Ted and threatening most fiercely, "I shall tell mother if you hurt him, Ted!" Released on bargain, Kirk jumped up and, getting well away, shouted casuistically, "To-morrow!" He kept the precious secret till next afternoon, then all three spent an absorbed hour, boring holes with a red-hot skewer through corks and other things. This was a useful discovery, and

saved Kirk much kitchen-trouble, for he was so often urgently wanting to bore holes through something or other.

"Red Admirals" and "Painted Ladies" floated down to settle on the laurel leaves, but oftenest on the gravel drive where it was hot and dry. The first time Kirk saw one—opening and shutting its wings—he held his breath, astounded at the vivid beauty of the sudden visitant. He backed carefully away, then rushed to the house, and burst in, calling—

"Mother! mother! come and look! please come and look! *Such* a butterfly!"

He took her hand persuasively. "Quick! quick! mother; do come before it goes; *do come now*, mother *dear*!"

Mary came too, and the children laughed as they ran, looking up.

"Oh, how funny! Mother's running!"

They each had a hand. Their mother too laughed delightfully.

"Stop now, please, mother, or it will be frightened," said Kirk, putting his hand round his mother to pull Mary's short petticoat, and they gently approached. There it was! and gave a half-spin as they looked.

"What kind is it, mother?" whispered the boy.

"An Admiral, I think. No, a Painted Lady. What a splendid beauty!"

Kirk took off his straw hat.

"No, do not catch it, dear; that would be cruel. It loves to be free and dance through the sunshine; it's a very tender little creature."

"There it goes!" cried Mary. Up! up! it went, and suddenly over the ivy and was gone.

The boy ran in and brought out a light hat for his mother, and they went slowly round the garden. She would not tell them a fairy tale just then, but they were allowed to gather

some long bunches of white desert currants and one green-gage apiece.

Because of that dear garden: certain flowers—the jessamine, red hawthorn, lilacs; faint-scented and crimson peonies, blooming on the fine cared-for grass at the verges of lawns—these ever afterwards awoke and received tender regard from Kirk. Their scents were destined to awake old long-silent thoughts, remote, pure and sunny memories, exquisite yearnings that gave rapture and pain.

CHAPTER III

STUART CLINTON'S mother was proud of her direct descent from the dark line of Douglas. She too was dark-eyed, black-haired, passionate, fiery, fanatical, very handsome, and typical of the women of her race. But, unlike her ancestors, she had not been a Roman Catholic. She married into a Midland family whose members had tradition of French blood. Kirk was a favourite with his grandmother, he was her "wee rat," but she died suddenly when he was five years old. Her husband died one year later.

Generations of young Mrs. Clinton's ancestors—the Athorpes—were buried in and round two old churches near Shapwick. Her father, long dead, had been a great sportsman: a violent, open, over-generous man. He had the blue eyes, large stature, and light auburn hair that go so often with that temperament. During his later years he had lost on the race-course most of his fortune. The red glint in Kirk's dark curly hair came from this maternal grandfather. His wife, whom he had loved fixedly and passionately from her girlhood, remained throughout her life devoted to him, often grieved by him, always forgiving him. She outlived her husband by many years. Their second child, Agnes, was Kirk's mother. It was now twelve years since the Clintons and the Athorpes had first made acquaintance. Old Mr. Clinton and his son were then constructing western railways in Somerset and Devon. Young Stuart—Kirk's father to be—and who was the image of his mother—fell in love with this slim, gentle and clever girl, Miss Athorpe. He had all too impetuously and confidently proposed, and had been quietly but sweetly refused. He took this so greatly to heart that

his father sent him to Southern France. There he was in charge of a portion of the new railways.

Young Mr. Clinton had remained a year in France when he distinguished himself by a brave act. Shortly after this he heard that a rival made headway with Agnes. He hastened home and took up the old position with his father. Again he saw a good deal of the Athorpes. At their house he made evasive and satiric fun about his deed at Isaac—and would tell nothing. But old Mr. Clinton, before Stuart returned, had given Agnes and her mother a full account, and had sent them cuttings from the French and London papers.

In two months young Clinton felt that his love was subtly returned. He proposed again, very diffidently this time—and was accepted. The young people soon afterwards were married. Clinton was then twenty-nine, and his wife ten years younger.

Alice Athorpe, aunt to Agnes, and very fond of her, alone opposed the match during the second courtship of Stuart. But she went to the wedding, and loyally made friends with the bridegroom.

Old Mr. Clinton personally managed the London office. He was ably assisted by a Mr. King who when young had been his chief draughtsman, but was now a partner on terms equal with Stuart. King was a man silent, clever, and saturnine. In business he was thoroughly efficient and reliable. The advent of the son in the father's profession had been a heavy secret blow to King's ambition; but he showed his feeling to no soul. On the contrary, he treated Stuart with marked civility and respect. Stuart, athletic and fastidious, hated town life and office routine, but he excelled as an executive engineer. In design and in the overcoming of difficulties in the field he took keen pleasure.

When old Mr. Clinton suddenly died, King and Stuart remained as partners, and things went on very much as be-

fore. In London directories "Clinton, King and Clinton" was unaltered.

King and young Clinton had remained always strictly on a business footing. Except perfunctorily, of ordinary courtesy, they spoke with each other only of professional matters, and what little there was that King knew of Clinton's private life he had learnt through his late senior partner, or through members of the staff. But it was from a client that King first heard of Clinton's most peculiar religion. In this King foresaw disaster. He foresaw danger to his own good income; but he said nothing to Clinton. Money, and a certain youthful married lady, were his sole real interests in life.

At this time the firm had just received a commission to execute a very large work in the Argentine. It had been arranged that Clinton should go out there for six months, and after that period he would go several times a year. King hoped the frequent absence from England, the voyages, the splendid piece of work entrusted to them, would cause a change, and bring Clinton to his senses.

The work was to be done not by contract, but by administration. The engineers would buy plant and material, and ship them out. King was ten years Clinton's senior, and was undoubtedly very experienced in this mercantile side of civil engineering. King would order, inspect, buy and despatch; Clinton would design, organise, and build. For years King had inspected and bought plants for South American Republics, and it was by his tact and acumen that this very important work had been secured. King had powers of attorney both from South America and from his partner, the object being to give him a free and quick hand; for the time-limit made a strict clause in the agreement.

Agnes and her husband had come to Mead Wells after five years spent mostly in a Yorkshire mining district and its port. The great quays built there by Clinton had first brought him forward in his profession. Their eldest boy, Edward,

had been born in Yorkshire; and there, too, Mr. Clinton first heard the doctrines of Irving, that young Scots minister who preached the urgent second coming of Christ, the giving to the world of a second twelve apostles—the complement of the four and twenty elders of Revelations. The extraordinary personality of Irving affected even such a man as Carlyle, but in Stuart Clinton it brought to birth a latent and fanatical religiousness. The new sect was wealthy, and very soon the congregations built beautiful churches, and—incomparably more remarkable—a liturgy was created which did not lack high qualities of beauty and originality. Certainly it was a fact the Primate of those days read and kept always on his table this new Liturgy. This same archbishop once spoke as follows: “They are most excellent Christians, they even pay one tenth of their income to any church in which they worship! *but do not let them teach in the Sunday schools; they are very much too clever.*”

Stuart was “called” as a lay-evangelist, and, although nominally Sundays alone were to be devoted by such laymen to Church work, Clinton presently began to let his absorbing interest affect his career. He spoke of it to clients.

Agnes and Stuart loved each other devoutly, and to her his change of religion at once brought great unhappiness. To her it seemed like a disaster come upon them. It was their first serious disagreement. She prayed daily for guidance in this great trouble; for it seemed insuperable that she could leave the Church of her fathers and embrace these new extraordinary doctrines. She and her husband now had many painful arguments—the husband earnest, enthusiastic, chafing, forceful, lit-up; the young wife troubled, perplexed, loth to be persuaded, acutely pained to differ even in thought from her husband, yet believing far deeper than do people to-day in the power of the ancient command, “Wives, obey your husbands.” There is no shadow of doubt the new “Apostolic Church” possessed a high percentage of men of good intellect, men of reasoned conviction, men who were leading unselfish,

useful lives; and Mrs. Clinton frequently met these men. They were all much older than she. Some were members of learned societies, some were well-established men of business or profession, some were men of leisure, and one was a banker. She observed them closely, and conversed much with them. She found that they were very much more well-read, logical, calm, intellectual, spiritually-minded, than was her fiery husband. He was, though only thirty-six, already becoming eminent as a civil engineer. He was indeed very handsome: he was provedly a brave man: he was her husband and dear lover; but he could never be her priest, her spiritual guide. She did not consciously think all this; but she deeply felt it.

It was contact with these elder men that most changed her feeling and her faith. Then, during one of her frequent visits to London she went to the new cathedral church in Gordon Square. After this she went there many times, and one day came away filled, it seemed, with a new spiritual insight—an exaltation. She believed at last, with full conviction, in this new, glorious, and wonderful revelation: that Christ in Person was about to revisit the earth. It came upon her that she lived in a most solemn time; that these were actually “The Last Days” of the world’s ordinary life.

It was sweet and marvellous now, that this divine knowledge had come to her through Stuart.

During this trying period—while Agnes was troubled in spirit, parting from the faith she had been born in, weighing, accepting, absorbing new ideas, while filled alternately by misgivings and new hopes and fervours—during this time the baby-body of Kirk was conceived, and he was born to her.

He had been rather a fretful child and not ordinary—often crying when no cause could be found—at other times angelically good when suffering from real ailment, such as painful teething. Before the end of his third year he showed unusual strength of affection towards his mother. Like a

dog, he would be content and quite silent for hours if near her; and if while at work she looked at the child, he felt it, and she caught his clear, dark-blue eyes fixed gravely upon her own, with an expression that had on one occasion brought sudden tears to her eyes, and she wondered and wondered over her second-born.

When Kirk was five years old he began to develop quite new traits, though his devotion to his mother never ceased. He was precociously intelligent in certain ways. While she was absent several weeks, he suddenly assumed command of Ted, and on a day in June the two small boys made reconnaissance round the long paddock that sloped away behind the Yorkshire house. On one hedge their neighbour's maids had spread a quantity of snowy new-washed linen, which act greatly offended Kirk, who said, "They hang down too far on *our* side, Ted. It's not fair." Mud was made at once, Ted carried the bucket, and Kirk dipped a stick into the mess, and then much mud was flung on all the unfortunate washing that hung below an exact level marked by Kirk. For this Ted and Kirk received a well-deserved caning from their father. But within a week the two bare-legged ones walked up and down the opposite hedge. Ted followed Kirk and carried a small round hamper. Kirk himself bore the kitchen chopper, and shortly proceeded to enlarge a small hole in the hedge-bottom. He wormed himself through this and Ted pushed the basket after him. Kirk then rapidly filled it with uprooted carrots, squeezed and pushed it back, and the two carried the spoils triumphantly into the kitchen. For this they received another caning, and later in the day were sent to the next house to say they were sorry, ask pardon, return the carrots, and explain themselves. They went in great trepidity, carrying the well-washed vegetables—their father insisted upon this expiation—but they came back full of cake, tea, and plenary absolution, bestowed by their childless neighbours.

A few days before their mother's return, the brilliant

notion of a pond, of making a *real pond*, flashed into Kirk's mind. Tremendous determination filled him. He infected Ted with a similar excitement. Breakfast over, they rushed off to the far limits of the paddock, and in a quiet soft corner commenced operations. Kirk, his mind full of the completed picture of a pond, with fish in the water and things sailing on the top, worked furiously, animating Ted to equal energy. They toiled with seaside spades, and with a small pointed iron bar that Kirk hammered in with a hard stone. They found the earth grew damper as they dug deeper. They might even find water! The morning passed quickly, and at last the maid called to them, for it was their dinner-time. Carefully and slyly they cleaned their boots and clothes in the back kitchen, then hastily devoured the meal, and forthwith went back to work with a will. By four o'clock the hole hid them to their waists—they had dug out a ton of soil and clay—and Kirk decided that the important time to fill the pond had now arrived.

By lying on one's face under the hedge the deep round marble fountain of the next garden was accessible and Kirk drew up water as fast as he could with their two seaside buckets, while Ted ran back and forth to fill the pond. What perturbation was there! when all the first buckets of water sank quite away! Then Kirk took shoes and socks off and selected clay, and with his feet he trod and puddled the wetted bottom smooth. What joy! when they had twelve inches of densely muddy water in the hole! Then they saw their father coming. The two boys were standing in the pond, delighted.

"Father! we've dug a pond!" cried Kirk, sunburnt, enthused, highly muddy and filthy.

"Oh! you have! have you?" He seized the child's ear and almost lifted him out, then roughly twisted the ear. The astonished little boy cried out, in a bent position, struggling, trying to hold his father's hand from hurting so extremely. Then he dug his nails into the hand with all his might.

Mr. Clinton instantly quite lost his temper. He took Kirk by the shoulder and propelled him to the house. There he severely caned him on the hands. The boy did not cry out, but looked away, stoically, darkly.

"I hope you are sorry and repent?" said Mr. Clinton. The boy did not speak. "This is the way you behave when your mother is away. First deliberate nastiness, throwing mud on clean clothes, then stealing, and now disobedience and temper!"

Mr. Clinton instructed Elizabeth to give Kirk dry bread and water for tea and supper.

In future Kirk avoided his father, but his troubles were not over. A few weeks later he was so unfortunate as to find a box of matches while walking out with the maid. He had never taken matches at home, but these, he opined, belonged to himself. He secreted them, and, on arriving home, finding no one in the dining-room he knelt down on the hearthrug and tried to strike one. The matches were damp, so he held several to the fire until they dried. He then struck one, and a little pleasing puff of blue smoke flew up. He had struck several more, and thrown the burnt matches into the fender when his father opened the door. Kirk looked up full of guilt and fear. He knew matches were forbidden.

"Boy! How dare you play with fire!" said Mr. Clinton, exceedingly angry. "You need a severe lesson."

He seized the boy's hand and forcibly held the fingers on the hot bar of the grate; he had no idea it was so hot, but two shrieks pierced the house. His frightened mother rushed into the room.

"Oh Stuart! How could you do such a thing to a child! How *could* you?"

Silently she took Kirk away, and dressed the burnt and blistered fingers. The hand was wrapped up a fortnight, for two fingers had stuck to the iron. It was a grievous severity, and caused the first words of anger between this husband and

wife. It had become quite plain to Mrs. Clinton that her husband did not in the least comprehend children—the tenderness of their small bodies, the complexities of their little untrained minds: and from this day the secret fixity of nature and memory in the child prevented him regarding his father except as an enemy, as one to be feared, to be dealt with very cautiously—one to evade and deceive.

It was about a year after this incident when the house at Mead Wells was selected. Mead Wells had been chosen for several good reasons—the high rolling country of the Cotswolds rose up eastwards and northwards of the town, impregnably shutting out the coldest winds. But the south and south-west air came up direct, untrammelled. The mild climate and pure air would recoup Mrs. Clinton's delicate health. The new-built Apostolic Church was a very strong attraction. And then, too, Agnes Clinton had been at school there when a girl.

She soon made many friends in Mead Wells. Except in her religion she lived a normal orthodox life. She became known as a quiet, sympathetic, and very practical and effective helper, and was drawn quickly into that unnamed guild of good women who are to be found in most English towns and cities, working among the sick and needy in their illness and confinements and poverty; obtaining safe employments for young girls, disbursing hospital tickets, finding ways and means of sending poor convalescents to the seaside, and the like.

Socially, too, Agnes was successful. Her face had the rare transparent clearness of a pink sea-shell, and though not perfect and regular of feature, it was beautiful. When she entered a room, strangers again and again looked at her. The rather long face was so noble, so pure and calm, so genuinely modest, intelligent, and sincere; and her clear grey eyes were so filled with outgoing kindness and spirituality. Her dark brown hair flowed softly in ripples over the full temples and framed the high forehead girlishly and richly. The mouth

was firm, yet very loveable, a smile always lurked there; the chin was strong, but not masculine. This gravity of expression in repose, this combination of strength, gentleness, wisdom, striking sweetness and spirituality, was the more remarkable in a woman of but twenty-five.

"I think I have never before seen so *good* a face." "Tell me! who is that youngish lady over there with the extraordinarily beautiful face?" "Who is the Sistine Madonna?" had been asked by various strangers when first they saw her.

When Stuart Clinton came home after his first six months in the Argentine, his wife gave a few dinners, and in the summer afternoons the old garden was often gay with ladies in light dresses. Mrs. Clinton's small garden parties were much liked, for she knew how to make each guest comfortable, even happy, and it was then a delight of Clinton's—newly home—to watch his wife's graceful form moving through the old English garden. His too frequent dogmatism or evangelical intrusions were regarded with secret amusement and amazement, especially by those who knew him as a man of business and a very clever engineer; but every one listened politely for the sake of the attractive wife, who led him in all things social. His heroic deed at Isaac had been told by friends, and people regarded somewhat similarly his fearless open championship of theories that, to them, seemed near madness.

Among the trees, lower down the Clintons' road, lived a widowed lady, Mrs. Benson, with her two children Harry and May; but the family included a little girl called Daisy, who was an adopted niece; and, also, the old governess, named oddly enough Miss Watchwell. Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Benson were very friendly, and were both members of the same church. One day, after a consultation of the two mothers and the old dame, it was agreed the six children should be taught together in the ample schoolroom at "Dadnor." Miss Watchwell had been a friend of Mrs. Benson's mother, and had

known the daughter from girlhood. Mrs. Benson had married the captain of a Cunarder, and her life being somewhat lonely, she had long since asked her old friend to live with her. Miss Watchwell had now been at "Dadnor" for twelve years.

She was quite agreeable to the new arrangement, for it would augment her small income and she already knew the Clinton children. She was a dear, sprightly old lady, very quick and clever, and a nuisance to no one, for she was unselfish, intelligent, and shrewd. At Dadnor she had long been general manager. On Sundays she went to Church of England. Mrs. Benson was a kindly woman, but of very weak health and mentally somewhat out of touch with children. Miss Watchwell, on the other hand, thoroughly understood them. They obeyed her, desired her approbation, and she maintained excellent discipline without resort to emphatic words or physical means. In appearance she was extremely thin and tall; her dear old face was quite covered with wrinkles, and she was very dignified, neat, up-to-date, alert, spotless and well-bred.

The six youngsters chummed together very well, though Kirk and Daisy were not absolutely at one when going walks. Ted paired off with ever-smiling May. It was soon understood quite perfectly among the children that she was Ted's sweetheart, that Mary belonged to golden-haired and giddy Harry, and Kirk's province was to escort Daisy—two years his elder, and a very pretty, exacting, and tall little m'selle. But in Kirk's secret opinion she was not nearly so pretty and nice as May or Mary, and he complained to his sister—"She won't do things." But he did his best, he was very polite to her, took her arm when she allowed it, was very desirous of being her protector, and always marched by her loyally on Saturdays, when they went a long walk into the Cotswolds.

Kirk remained behind the others on one Monday afternoon and asked Miss Watchwell what flowers she liked best.

"Flowers, Kirk? I like them nearly all, dear."

"Ah, but, Miss Watchwell, what are your very *favourite* ones?" asked he most persuasively, and with his eyes on hers he continued—"I like musk *awfully*, and petunias, and *best*, I like white violets, they're lovely! Don't *you* like those best?"

"It's hard to say, dear; I like flowers so much."

"Oh yes! I know! I know!" cried Kirk, unsatisfied, and he took her hand with both his, and pulled her down affectionately, and she laughed at him.

"But which do you like the very, *very* best?"

"I think then . . . white violets!"

The boy, delighted, full of his secret intention, looked at her a moment, then said good-bye and raced off.

Next morning he presented her with a little pot of white violets. She would have kissed him, but she was very wise. Like Kirk's mother, she knew the loss of brotherhood and sisterhood that came from any faintest inequality in the treatment of children. Ted twitted Kirk as little boys do, but next morning he and Mary each brought Miss Watchwell a bunch of garden flowers. After this, these gifts of flowers were brought several times a week, but Ted and Mary at last forgot them, the novelty wore off, and they ceased to bring them. But Kirk made it a habit; he grew flowers specially for the old lady, and brought them every Monday. Soon after the pot of violets had been given, Daisy began to treat Kirk with great indifference. An obscure instinct moved the boy; he brought her a fine pot of musk. On that morning the boy and girl were by themselves in the schoolroom before lessons began.

"For you, Daisy!" said Kirk, shyly but warmly, and smiling at her.

"Thank you, Kirk." She put it on the window-sill and returned, calmly saying—

"I don't think I like musk very much; it smells so like our church, and I hate church."

"Oh! . . . all right . . . then see what I do; you look out of the window," said Kirk, quietly, but much hurt.

He picked the pot up, ran outside the house and offered it to a man passing in the road. The man looked puzzled, he hesitated, took it in his hands, looked again at Kirk, grinned, thanked him, and went on, bearing away the pot of musk. Kirk re-entered the house well in front of Ted and Mary, who, observing distantly, were quite mystified. Kirk ran upstairs and found Daisy crying. Quite astonished, he was instantly very much distressed. He tried gently to take the little girl's hands from her face and kiss her. Then he put his arms round her, saying, "Oh, don't cry; *don't* cry, dear—I'm dreadfully sorry; I'll get you a—a—simply *splendid* pot! I *didn't* know you were only funning." But she repulsed him, and dried her eyes before Miss Watchwell came in.

This was not the very first disturbance of its kind known to Kirk's childish soul. When the family arrived at Mead Wells he had gone with the nurse and his brother and sister to the river-margined public gardens. After the dark mining district, he was quite carried away by this fairy-like place of leafy distance, lawns and lakes, sparkling fountains, vivid flowers. Here he had first met the fair child lying upon her back in the long wheeled chair, drawn slowly through the shade of great trees. An intense interest and pity filled him, but he smiled brightly at her and she smiled back—he looked only at her sweet, patient face, at her eyes—he concealed his boy-like interest in her paralysis. Somehow he knew it would hurt her very much to look curiously. They met several times after this and always smiled at each other, and on one occasion Kirk, inwardly disturbed, slipped off from the others to a place where, kneeling under a big tree, he could look down into the dark gliding river, so unfathomed. He watched the fallen petals of red chestnut flowers gently moving on like little fairy boats, he watched the drifting struggling insects in the bright reflections going on their irrevoc-

cable way, and as he looked, thinking of the fair child's face, a nameless melancholy ecstasy overcame him.

Kirk could not understand why Daisy would not be "nice with me like May and Mary." She would seldom walk with him, and they settled differences at last by dividing between them Miss Watchwell. Her right arm belonged to Daisy, her left to Kirk.

Under the refined old lady the Clinton children made good progress in the beginnings of Latin, French, arithmetic, history, geography and singing; and these were very happy times. One sunny day Mary exclaimed, "There's father!" Miss Watchwell glanced out, and cried quickly, "Look! children! all of you!"

They had just time to see him, remove from the footpath a bright piece of orange peel. With his stick he made it fall in the stone channel. They saw Mr. Clinton walk on, very military, very upright, and square-shouldered.

"See how careful and thoughtful your father is; what a good example he sets us!" said Miss Watchwell.

CHAPTER IV

ON a summer forenoon the liner bringing Clinton home made her majestic way deliberately up the Mersey, and then, her engines scarcely moving, the heavy cables roared through the hawse-holes till the anchors took the sand. An hour later Clinton was sitting in the South Wales express. He was returning from his second voyage. He changed trains at Hereford, passed during late afternoon far south of the Malverns—stopping at every country station—and by seven o'clock he was leaning forward in the open carriage as he entered the old garden at Mead Wells. In the still and warm close of the day, the evening primrose, the stocks, the gillies, the mignonette, the roses—a hundred flowers—scented the air. Unconsciously he raised his head, stood up, and deeply breathed, his eyes fixed on the form of his wife; for he could discern her standing outside the porch, a white figure against the dark jessamine: the children and the servants were also there. Half a minute later he sprang out, took her sweet face in his hands and kissed her.

Next morning, after breakfast, Clinton quickly sorted his many letters, then tore them open hastily one by one, glanced through each and put it on the proper file. He picked up a letter that bore a Portuguese stamp and postmark. Astonished, he looked close at this; he turned the letter over, looked again, and sat still a moment. The writing was King's. Then saying to himself, "*King! at Lisbon?*" he broke the seal and read—

"Grand Hotel Estremadura,
"Lisboa.

"DEAR CLINTON,

"Without consulting you, I have, as it were, wound up our estate, and made a fair division of the proceeds. To you, young and

energetic for your years, falls the growing practice, the London office, the name, goodwill and fixtures of 'Clinton, King and Clinton.' You will no longer be annoyed by my inferior incompetent design. You will have a free hand. For these great advantages you pay some forty thousand pounds of what we will call capital. Although perhaps not quite in order, it was needful for me to draw my share of our settlement from funds ready to hand, and I have no doubt that a man of your-marked integrity and religious life will see to it that these funds be replenished in time to save any coarse misunderstandings that might injure the good name of 'Clinton, King and Clinton.' You have my free leave to keep the name as it is. We shall be spending some time here; indeed, we may settle here for life. I like the place, the climate, the unstrenuous virtue of the people; and should you call here on your busy voyaging, we would do our best to make you comfortable, although there is no church here that would, I think, meet your somewhat exceptional requirements.

"Yours sincerely,

"EWART KING."

King had left England several days before Clinton was due back. He had written his letter and despatched it on the day he reached Lisbon. He had some feelings of compunction. He did not wish to ruin his partner. But Clinton sailed from Buenos Ayres later than was arranged.

It was now nearly three weeks since King disappeared from London with a young married woman. It was the elderly husband of this girl, who, anxious and distraught, had set Scotland Yard to work. On the same evening that Clinton reached home all had been found out. Even now, as he sat there motionless, hit heavily, but thinking hard, a telegram from the chief assistant engineer was being brought up the drive.

Clinton pulled himself together, told his wife nothing, and went up to town.

Two days later he returned to Mead Wells. He entered the house, but did not greet his wife. She followed him into his study. He sat down as if greatly weary. He put his

arms on the table. His eyes gazed vacantly at the polished wood. He seemed unaware of her presence. Fear seized her.

"Are you ill, dear? What is it?"

"I—I—I—Agnes, my poor darling . . . I've lost everything . . . our money, almost all . . . I've been a fool. That scoundrel King has gone off with forty thousand. Read that."

For any ordinary man things were not quite as bad as Clinton thought. Yet it was indeed a disaster. He had just repaid the money. For himself remained only some two thousand pounds. The practice had received a very heavy blow; the dead loss in money was not so serious as the injury to a good name. But the worst effect was the blow to Clinton's pride. Hypersensitive and quixotic where his honour was concerned, vain to extreme of his name as a shrewd man, he now imagined himself branded as a fool. Wrongheadedly he had misread all the sympathy he had just received in Victoria Street, and he felt he could go there again, never.

Clinton could not brook a smaller house at Mead Wells, and, moreover, it became plain in a few weeks that he must leave that town. The Argentine authorities sent him a generous cheque for his services to date, but they regretted they must take the work from his hands and place it with "a firm of large substance," unless he cared to enter into a special guaranty bond for a sum of not less than fifty thousand pounds, and at once deposit the said sum with approved bankers.

Clinton could not meet such conditions, and it sharply embittered him to see the work pass to well-known rivals.

His wife urged him to live near London, personally manage the London office, and rehabilitate the practice. Unfortunately he did not follow this advice. Instead, the family a few months later moved to Severnly, in Worcestershire. The railway from Severnly, giving easy access to the midland metropolis, had not had much effect on the small ancient city.

Houses were old and large, rents were still low, at Severnly. Clinton hoped to build up in a few years a good provincial practice, and for this purpose an office at Birmingham would, he thought, be central and very suitable. After careful search he secured a small suite of rooms in a large modern building in Colmore Row. The index in the hall and the brass plate on his own entrance bore the inscription: "Stuart Clinton, M. Inst. C. E., Civil and Mining Engineer."

The staff for the present comprised one senior and one junior assistant engineer, and one draughtsman-typist. They were the only men he had retained from his old staff. The first work at the new office was to finish all commissions that were in hand before King left London.

Clinton went to Birmingham four or five times a week. The fast trains did the journey in a little over half-an-hour. Severnly was a much warmer place than Birmingham, for the country round was very fertile, of lower altitude, and the pure winds came to Severnly over miles of hops and corn, through orchards innumerable and through countless noble trees. The clear river Temlys, secluded home of many a trout and grayling, flowed not far away.

Some good reasons, beside that of fair proximity to the Midland centre, influenced the Clintons in their choice of Severnly.

The place was an old seat of learning, and the schools for boys and girls were well known. At Salbury, six miles from Severnly and upon the main line, was a small Apostolic Church which the Clintons could attend.

The children with ease adapted themselves to new conditions, indeed they enjoyed the novelty, but their parents felt as though uprooted, and Agnes for three months had been enceinte.

Clinton had always held strange objections to public schools, but his wife prevailed over him. When at Mead Wells, the boys were entered for Loretto—Stuart's old school—but now, unless he did very well, it would not be possible to

send his own boys there; and Severnly School would then be a good and economical alternative. In the meantime all three children were sent to a local dame's school. Next year the boys would go either to Loretto or Severnly.

CHAPTER V

SOON after the arrival at the new home, Kirk began to take solitary walks of great distance for his age. He revelled in boyish explorations of an historic and beautiful countryside. He brought back, one day, some extraordinary little stones he had found in a roadside heap of gravel. His mother told him they were fossils, the remains of antediluvian animals, turned to stone during great ages. For some time this satisfied the deep curiosity of Kirk; but a thirst insatiable, to explore, to observe, to know, silently grew in him. He was endowed with that somewhat rare handicap and gift—mental fearlessness. All persons, as well as things, received his close, unobtrusive scrutiny. Especially he observed his father, and in silence he criticised him. Kirk knew well that himself and his father were inimical. He observed secretly, that in all matters of division and decision settled by his father the worst fell to himself. Events took place more and more frequently that caused the boy to make strong and damaging discrimination between his father and his mother. To him they were different as the poles.

Mrs. Clinton's aunt, Alice Athorpe, had lately spent a few days in the new home at Severnly, and she believed in tipping small boys. So soon as the cab had driven away off rushed Kirk down the road. In his hand a five-shilling piece grew hot. A keen desire bottled up for quite a fortnight gave wings to his feet.

From running at top speed he pulled himself up at a large new tea-shop. Anxiously he glanced into the window to assure himself "they" were not gone, then he entered and said breathlessly, as he looked into the window from inside—

"I want those, please—those big black ones, with the flowers on them, eighteen-pence each."

He put the money on the counter.

"No, you needn't wrap them up!" exclaimed the boy, and he took eagerly the two large common vases from the smiling shopman.

"Thank you!" cried Kirk, with a vase under each arm as he left the shop.

"Hey! Here's the change, sir!"

Kirk returned, flushing a little, but smiling. "Put it in my pocket, please," said he, not loosing the vases.

About ten minutes later, he barely knocked, and burst into the dining-room, panting hot, saying, "Look! mother! For you!" He placed them in her arms.

His father laughed loudly and derisively. "Humph! Spent it already, you young cub, have you?"

"Not all, father," apologised Kirk, much chilled.

But Mrs. Clinton, murmuring to her husband, "Don't, dear," carefully stood the vases on the dining-room table, then turned and clasped her boy gently by each arm and kissed him twice with a divine tenderness.

"Thank you, darling—so much, they will be precious to me."

She removed the two Dresden jars from the mantelpiece to a sideboard, and substituted the vases.

"They shall stand here until I find a place for them."

Kirk looked ecstatically from the vases to his mother. His father shrugged his shoulders and grinned grimly as he too looked at the new ornaments; then he laughed softly and said—

"Well, well, Agnes, I suppose you are right. . . . Go away quietly now, boy. I'm glad to see you think of your dear mother."

Kirk received a loving smile as he went out. He glowed with satisfaction.

At midday dinner, when his father was at home and carved, Kirk was served last. This was quite proper in Kirk's eyes. Mother came first, Mary was a girl, and Ted was the eldest. But Mr. Clinton always cut off the worst slices—for example, the red outside pieces of the cold leg of mutton—and left them until it became Kirk's turn. These pieces, which nauseated the fastidious Kirk, were then adroitly turned over and given to him best side uppermost. One Saturday, after this had occurred very many times—unnoticed by any one save Kirk—the boy ostentatiously turned each slice ugly side uppermost, and at the same time looked fixedly at his father, who reddened with anger.

"Why do you look-at-me-like-that-sir?"

"Kirk dear!" said his mother, quite surprised.

"I *always* get the outside."

"You-will-take-what-you-can-get, sir, and be thankful that you have good food to eat! Impudence . . . puppy . . . !"

That afternoon Mrs. Clinton, in her room, sent for Kirk. He felt he was to be chided, and he went with a certain sulkiness. She was sitting down, and took his hands and drew him, slightly resisting, to her knees.

"Kirk dear, I was so grieved that you were rude to father."

"Father's not fair, mother . . . he doesn't like me . . . he . . . he burnt my hand."

"Kirk! Kirk! my own dear boy, never speak against father. I cannot bear it. . . . He has many great troubles that you do not know of. He cares very much for you all. He did not think that he was treating you unfairly; he has so much to think of that he cannot be troubled with little things. Does it matter, dear? if your food is not quite as you wish? It is such a small thing to be rude about—to father, who loves *me*, dear. He has worked so hard—much harder than you know—and he has given us our house, and earned for us our clothes, and food, and all we have. When he burnt your hand—so long, long ago, Kirk—he did not mean to hurt

you so much; he did not know he had hurt you so much. His hands are much harder than yours, and he didn't know that. It was right of him to punish you, Kirk. He wished to save you from a terrible accident he remembered. When father himself was a very little boy, he and a little friend he loved played with matches, and his playmate's clothes took fire. His little friend was dreadfully burnt and became a cripple. Father was very fond of him. So you see why father punished you? . . . Have you remembered that, all this long, long time, dear? Why did you not tell mother what troubled you? You will forgive father now, will you not, dear?"

Kirk had tears in his eyes. He replied huskily—

"Yes, mother."

She put her arm round him and drew him to herself, and the boy clasped her with passionate affection and repentance; she felt, though, that his strong feelings were not so very much altered, and a thought flashed into her mind.

"Do you know that father is a very *brave* man, Kirk?"

"Is he, mother? . . . Is he?" said Kirk, doubtfully.

"Father is very brave. I will tell you and Ted, soon, about something father once did that was very noble, very heroic."

A few minutes later Kirk softly closed his mother's bedroom door and went downstairs in trepidation and resolution—to speak to his father very graciously indeed. But on arrival he could only say doggedly but respectfully—

"I am very sorry I was rude, father."

After a pause of five seconds his father looked up from his papers, gazed at him sternly from beneath his shaggy brows, relented slightly, and said gravely—

"I accept your apology. I hope that you will be a better boy in future, Kirkpatrick."

Before writing his occasional evangelistic sermons for the Salisbury Church, Mr. Clinton always became restless. He put off writing in the morning and would do it in the afternoon,

then in the evening, then next night; but generally it was on Saturday evening the house had to be kept scrupulously silent. Nor could he write if any one else were in the room, even if it were his wife. For some reason he preferred the dining-room. It was rather dark and austere. If the boys or any one thoughtlessly made a noise in the hall, he would dash out on them full of irritation. Animals and children do not understand such asperities, and the keen mind of Kirk readily observed the inconsistency between his father's temper and the occupation with a sacred thing. There was also a second cause for Kirk's secret contempt, for he had discovered that his father's sermons were largely "only out of books."

One Saturday evening, three weeks after he had been rude to his father, Kirk knocked at the drawing-room door and entered quietly.

"Mother, father says Ted and I are to go to bed in ten minutes because we've made a noise, and I'm sorry. May we please have our supper now, mother?"

His mother drew from her hand a sock that she was darning, and looked at Kirk. It was only half-past six.

"Very well, dear. Tell Jane to give you some milk . . . yes . . . you may have strawberry jam. Make no more noise, dear, it disturbs father so much when he is writing . . . and when you're both in bed, I'll come up and tell you and Ted a story, a real story."

"Oo! mother! hoo-ray!" said Kirk, with suppressed pleasure as he squeezed her hand.

Outside the drawing-room he seized Ted and hurried him to the kitchen, whispering—

"Come on, Ted! Strawberry! and mother's coming up to tell us a story!" adding, with subtle intent to excite Ted, "I shan't tell you what it's about!"

"You don't know, I'll bet!" said Ted, doubtful, but a little willing to be played on.

"Oh, don't I? Well, you'll *see*!" very impressively said Kirk.

Mrs. Clinton sat on a low chair which the boys had placed ready between their beds. They had pushed the beds near together. The chair stood between the bed-heads. She touched their pillows on either side, and each boy "snuggled" one of her beautiful hands and forearms in his breast. This was one of Kirk's oddities, in which their mother had long acquiesced. She was facing the window and looked out at their neighbours' great "blossomed pear-tree," as she carried her thoughts back to girlhood.

"I am going to tell you a true story about father. It was when he was in France, making the railway with Mr. Talmas, who you remember once came to Mead Wells?"

"Yes, he made me a smoke-box," said Kirk.

"They had to build the big bridge over the river at Isaac: and first they had to build the round piers that stand in the river like those at Mead Wells bridge; but this is a very big bridge, and the piers stand far out in the deep river, like great round legs; and first they had to make those legs.

"Now you know how upright a round tin can will float, if you put some water in it? Well, father and the men made a thing just like a great tin can, it was as big inside as this room, only it was round, like a deep tub, and was made of iron. They built it on the shore on a sloping platform of wood, and then made it slide off into the water. They poured in water until the big tub floated straight up, and then two little steamers came and towed it to its place in the river; and there with anchors and ropes the men made it float without moving, just in the right place, where the bridge was to be; and it looked like a big iron can. Then they poured more water in and made it go down until the sides were floating only about twice as high as my knees above the water outside. And then they brought curved flat plates of iron and made the sides higher, like building up the tin can longer and longer, and they filled it up with more water, and it sank deeper and deeper. Do you understand, Ted?"

"Oh yes, and the bottom of it kept going down?"

"Yes."

"Oo! I see, Ted! Mother," spoke Kirk, "then they put *more* sides on? and at last it stood on the bottom of the river?"

"Quite right, dear. It sat on the bottom and the sides were high out of the water. But the bottom was of deep mud, and the big iron can sank right down into it and stood still. Then they filled it quite up with water and all its weight was on the mud. It sank in deeply. But that was not enough, so they got on to it and put big beams of wood across the top, and piled up bars of iron until the great weight squeezed the bottom deep down into the mud: it went in as deep as this room and the big tub was as deep as our house! Then diver men came, like those you saw at Hull, and they went down inside the great iron can, and undid the bottom. They unscrewed it inside and took out all the bottom, and the thick mud welled up inside. And then, you see, it was like a tin can with no bottom; and then, when they kept on making the sides higher, and putting weights on the top, the sharp round edge cut down and down through mud and sand until at last it came to hard rock, and could be pushed down no more."

"And then what did they do?"

"They pumped all the water out until they could look down inside and see the mud, and they lifted the mud out with huge buckets that were drawn up swiftly by an engine that stood on a steamer tied alongside. It was an engine very like the crane you both saw lifting up big blocks of stone at Tachmead Quarry. But now I must go and kiss Mary good-night, and tuck her in, and then I'll tell you the rest!"

A small soprano voice had several times called "Moth—er!"

"Well, they took out all the mud and clay inside the big can—it is called a caisson, 'ka-son'—and then found that only one side of the cutting edge was resting on the rock, and that would *never* do! . . . Because, dears, the bridge would be

so very, very heavy, with the trains going over it and shaking, that the big can must rest all round, flat on the rock, or else it would soon begin to lean over. Do you understand, boys?"

"I think I know, mother. Aren't they going to put the bridge on the top of the can thing?"

"Yes."

"Ah! I see now!" said Ted.

"Yes, they had to break the rock away and make it quite flat; and it was very hard rock. So they bored lots of holes in it and put gunpowder into them, and fuses like those in the Chinese crackers, only very big ones. Then they took away all the tools and lanterns. Then a man went down and lit all the long fuses, and then he was wound up to the top in the great bucket, and he went away quickly in a boat till out of danger, and presently such a banging! Like guns! Bits of rock flew up—and then some thick smoke came up. They waited a long time till they thought it safe to go back. Father was on the shore, and some of his men rowed to the caisson before him; and two of them, with his young English foreman, William Colquhoun, were lowered down, they were so eager to see if the rock was all properly broken, and they had the lanterns. But as soon as they got to the bottom the lights went out and the men fell down insensible before they knew what was the matter."

"Why, mother? Why?" breathlessly asked the boys.

"Because gunpowder makes deadly heavy gas when it goes off, and the gas stopped at the bottom, *and they had forgotten that*. The Frenchmen at the top shouted down, but no one answered. Then they were frightened; then they shouted to father who was coming on one of the boats. The men stooped down, lit a newspaper and dropped it down the black square hole where the ropes went through. It sailed down blazing, and just for a moment they saw three men lying there quite still, then the blaze went out in the heavy gas. It puts out lights, that kind of gas. No one dare go down. Then father was rowed up in great haste. He told two men to pull their

shirts off quick and he made the pump start sucking the gas out as hard as it could. He said in French, 'Lower me, *quick!* When I jerk the bell, *wind up quick!* Send for the doctor! Throw burning things down to light me! Get a lantern and lower it down!' He soused a shirt in water, tied it round his face, stepped into the iron bucket and at once the engine lowered him down. Father rang the bell in ever so short a time, and when they wound him up he was standing in the big bucket, and he had put in the two insensible Frenchmen and was holding them. He breathed hard while they pulled the poor men out; then in a minute he retied the wet shirt over his mouth to keep the gas out, and was lowered again. The man lowering the lantern for father dropped it. They could not see father; it seemed so terribly long, the time. Oh, they were so angry with the man for dropping it. At last the bell rang, and they wound up so fast that poor father's head hit the hole as he came up, and they caught him as he was falling back, and that is what made that red mark on his temple. He was dreadfully cut and bleeding, but he had got William safe."

Kirk had jumped out of bed and stood by his mother.

"Oh! . . . how awfully brave! . . . I didn't *know* father was like that! . . . Fancy! father did *that!*" . . .

The mother's eyes were bright and a bit wet with these vivid recollections, and with pleasure that she had thought of this means of making her difficult boy see his father as she did.

. . . "And were they dead, mother?" asked Ted.

"No, dear, the doctor recovered them, and one of those men is old Jacques, of whom you have heard father tell funny things."

"And what did the men do and all of them? *Wouldn't* they be pleased?"

"I believe they all kissed him! All his Frenchmen! as soon as he opened his eyes and sat up. And it made him laugh, grandpa told me, although his poor head was so hurt."

"Oh, how funny!" laughed the boys, looking at each other in amazement.

There had been many things to ask about; the gas, the wet shirts, the completion of the bridge.

"Yes, you may talk quietly until the landing clock strikes again, then you must stop and go to sleep."

"Tuck me in, mother."

"Me too, mother."

It was a warm evening, but the boys would on no account forego this form of caress.

On Sunday afternoon at Mead Wells, Mrs. Clinton had always read and talked interestingly to her children, drawing them together and using her gift for story and conversation to hold their attention closely while she instilled her loving teaching into their hearts. The children took great pleasure in these Sunday hours with their mother, and looked forward to them. But soon after they came to Severnly, her health became so frail that she was ordered to lie down and try to sleep every afternoon, and her husband insisted on obedience to doctor's orders.

Mrs. Clinton was broad-minded over books, but her husband's narrow views required a compromise.

On Sundays the children read the *Quiver*, bound copies of *The Sunday at Home*, and, specially bought for them by their mother, the delightful books of Mrs. Ewing. Then, too, they read *Little Folks*, *Peter Parley's Annual*, and three books that Kirk read and re-read with avidity, the "History of the Reformation," "Heroes of Charity," and Smiles' "Lives of the Engineers."

Up to now, Mr. Clinton had taken but little notice of what the children read on Sundays—he had been abroad so much—and his wife looked after all the children's affairs. But now that she was semi-invalid he began to exert much personal authority over them.

On a Sunday afternoon, two weeks after Kirk had apologised to him, he took out of Ted's hands the latest copy of the *Quiver*. He glanced through it, sat down, and again looked through it.

"This is a novel—nothing but a trashy novel!"

He read for ten minutes longer, while Ted fidgeted about. Kirk had been reading slowly and with eminent delight in an old massive *Sunday at Home*. The article was one from a long series called "Episodes of an Obscure Life." They were the very human experiences of a young curate in the East End, long before "slumming" became a word.

Mr. Clinton placed Ted's *Quiver* face down on the table, and said—

"Bring me what you are reading, Kirkpatrick."

On the open page Mr. Clinton read the remarks of a Sunday bird-catcher. He was telling the curate how he had, after reading it, deliberately torn up a tract given him by an old lady in a train. "Them bits fluttered up in the wind and frit away the best clutch o' linnets that ever kem under a net; just as I stooped to pull the cords! Them linnets fled up and set on the blackberry 'edge. I counted twelve cocks and eight 'ens, and off they went," etc., etc., etc.

Kirk sat as it were in the dock, awaiting the judgment with foreknowledge. In the "Episodes" there were, further on, most absorbing details of a suicide. Kirk had but skimmed it in advance, and was now steadily reading onwards to that chapter. His father—secretly interested—read quite a long time. Then he made a noise with his tongue and teeth.

"T! T! T! Rubbish, trash, bosh. A trashy novel! I cannot let you read this book. It is not fit for the Lord's Holy Day!"

... "But mother said I might read it, father?" respectfully ventured Kirk.

"Your mother evidently was not aware of its contents. Put it away."

Kirk obeyed, with a gloomy, dispirited air. A heavy

silence fell upon the three children. They felt it was very much nicer when mother was there.

Mr. Clinton stood by the bookcase for a long time, pulling books out, turning pages over and reading. Kirk slowly stole to the door.

"Where are you going, sir?"

"To get a drink, father."

"You will have your tea soon. Read this; you are old enough and intelligent enough to understand it." He handed his son a large book called "Crozier's Sermons." It was one of those heavy incompetents that crowd the shelves of the piously dull, and are read never except by the authors.

During those six months in which their mother remained weak, how suppressed were these children, how tediously, how desperately slowly passed the Sunday afternoons, while they tried to extract interest from those unpalatable monuments of vanity and verbosity, books highly honoured even when dusted once a month by the housemaid.

Frequently their father, aroused by something he was reading, would leave his chair, walk about and harangue them on religious matters. A fierce and triumphant note ran through all his teachings. The phrases "One hope of our calling," "the hope that maketh pure even as He is pure," "the coming of our Lord," were constantly used, and when Mr. Clinton reached his more startling conclusions, he invariably used the expressions: "He will come as a thief in the night!" "Caught up to meet the Lord in the twinkling of an eye!" "One shall be taken, the other left!" "The hundred and forty-four thousand of his first-fruits who are waiting and watching for Him will be translated in an instant to stand by the Lamb!"

On the Sunday in question, as Mr. Clinton pushed his peroration, his face was darkly triumphant and revengeful, his voice lower—

"Then woe upon those who are left, upon all those people round us; God will not desert them, but a fearful time awaits

them. All those who wish to save their souls will have to do so through martyrdom. There shall be wars and rumours of wars; nation shall fight against nation, kingdom shall rise against kingdom, and the man Antichrist will appear. He will be a Napoleonic man, who will rule with a *rod of iron*. He will set a mark in their hands, the mark of the Beast, whose number is six, six, six. Those who have it not shall not buy in the market place, they will have to suffer terrible martyrdom, every man will carry his life in his hand. Terrible tortures will be inflicted on mothers, fathers, children, who refuse his deity. And the time is now at hand, when the elect shall be caught up to meet the Lord. . . . It may happen to-night!"

"The night is far spent, and the time is at hand. The Lord in His mercy and loving-kindness has sent forth His second ministers and apostles into the earth . . . He has given the people of the earth this last chance. The daily papers even now are full of grave symptoms. The great nations are all ready to fly at each other's throats. There are wars and rumours of wars, pestilences and famines. The churches of God are deserted, infidelity flourishes like a green bay tree, but He will smite them with a rod of iron!"

These harangues gave Kirk a feeling of great coming disaster, and a keen personal fear. He always believed secretly that himself would be left in bed, and Ted would be taken. He had found an old copy of "Fox's Book of Martyrs," filled with horrible old wood-cuts, and he had read secretly some of this book, and, in consequence, been unable to eat or sleep properly for two days afterwards—so utterly shocked and outraged was he, and so burning and revengefully angered against the Roman Catholics who had done these revolting acts. He constantly thought over with fear whether he would be brave enough to face the frightful pictured tortures, or whether he would be a coward and "recant." He was quite convinced that himself and his father would *not* be "caught up," and he looked strangely this afternoon on Mary

and Ted, who were so complacent over these real, dreadful and most imminent things-to-be, that oppressed himself with such questionings.

Six months after the arrival at Severnly Agnes Clinton gave birth to a daughter. Except in the eyes of the ordinary father, mother and nurse, the infant even of three months is very rarely beautiful in face, but this baby-girl of the Clintons was beautiful almost from birth. She quickly possessed a profusion of long curly hair, silky, and of bright but darkest brown. Her face was oval, well formed, with a fair, transparent olive complexion; the little features were delicately chiselled, and her deep violet-hued eyes looked at one with a preternatural grave sweetness and intelligence.

A week or two after the birth of the child, Mr. Clinton ran downstairs enthusiastically and entered the dining-room. He spoke much more to himself than to his three children at table—

“The only child I ever felt I could love! Incomparably superior to you others. A most exquisite child! I shall name her Stella Kirkpatrick! Her face is a star; you others are nothing.”

Kirk, Ted and Mary all felt much humbled by these words; they felt that there was truth in them, but their feelings were nearer those of their mother, and the daily visit to kiss her, and see and kiss the Raphaelesque infant, gave them intense pleasure.

CHAPTER VI

TED and Kirk were sent as day-boys to Severnly School, about one mile from the town. The school was an ancient place of learning, but modernised and possessing new laboratories, a "shell," gymnasium, swimming bath, and sanatorium.

The newer parts were built round old cricket fields, or adjoined the historic buildings. A chancel had been added carefully to the rather small early English chapel.

Severnly ranked as one of the best known smaller public schools.

Most of the four hundred boys came from various parts of England, but a strong contingent came from Ireland, a few from Scotland, and of some the parents were in India.

Many families lived in Severnly for the sake of their children's education, and the day-boys numbered over a hundred.

The usual feud held good between boarders and day-boys. At Severnly it was interesting to note that day-boys were nearly always first, both in games and learning. Year by year they carried off the challenge cups and valuable long-founded scholarships. This supported one of Clinton's views on education—that boys should never be cut off from the home influence.

Ted made steady all-round progress at school, but Kirk was more variable. In English, physics, chemistry, geography and divinity the younger boy easily was high up in his form, but he deliberately neglected other subjects; so much so, that he received the disgrace once or twice of being

“put on *satis*”; and for persistent evasion of German grammar he received a well-deserved caning. He took it contentedly. Frequent canings were the order of the day at Severnly. On one count or another few escaped them. The classics master wrote in Kirk’s second report, “Very clever, but idle,” and his father severely lectured him—taking scant notice of the English and science masters, who had written respectively, “Good progress,” and “Works intelligently and hard.”

The “challenge” system was in full vogue. Was one boy offended by another? he sent a challenge to the offender. They met behind the fives-courts, and there fought it out under the supervision of prefects, who stopped a fight if the boys were very unequal, or when enough blood had been drawn. All the strict conditions of English fisticuffs were observed closely. To “hit foul” was almost as indelible as to “funk a challenge.” Kirk had many fights. Always very nervous until the first blow, he then attacked with fury or defended with much *sang-froid*, both giving and receiving thrashings; and his rather prominent nose often bled freely. By eagerly taking lessons from the sergeant of the gymnasium, he made up for his light build.

Ted, big but peaceable, had but one fight; only once was he challenged. Kirk felt an agony of concealed anxiety when he saw his brother’s set face amid the dense ring of boys. But Ted was quite successful.

Kirk played football regularly as a forward, first in the third and then in the second team. He also got placed in the half-mile and mile, and though quite a small boy, was honoured by handicaps of only thirty and sixty yards. With the science master—keen to bring up-to-date the school museum—Kirk soon became great friends. He had, of course, at once joined the school “Bug and Beetle Society.” But at this time it was the romantic, the beautiful, the hidden in geology, ornithology, and botany that so attracted him. In the coldly scientific, Kirk felt as yet but little interest. He

spent all holidays in excursions with chosen spirits, who, led by himself, penetrated the most sacred and distant preserved fastnesses of the neighbourhood. In those days bird-nesting was a sport well recognised in the society of schools. Climbing was the finer part of it, and Kirk, by the age of fourteen, was held by many to be "cock climber" of the school. He had special climbing-irons made, was an adept with ropes, and the highest nest in the highest tree became unsafe from his attack. Kirk brought many rare egg specimens to the museum, and also an increasing number of fossils. These were received warmly by Dr. Barry, who soon made the boy president of the geological section of the "Bugs and Beetles."

With intense concentration of mind and soul, Kirk wrote little papers on geology. These were edited by Dr. Barry, and published in "The Tudor Rose," the school journal. On the recommendation of Barry, Kirk was exempted by the captains from Wednesday "footer"—the opinion in conclave being that "Clinton minor's not a tuckshop rotter; we know he wants it for tramping, et cetera; he's never skulked, and he makes a doocid good fox. D'you remember last season? found absolutely new ground we'd *never* been in! and fairly had us! didn't he?"

A resolution passed that "Clinton minor is hereby exempted from Wednesday games, on condition that he keep himself fit, and be prepared to enter for all school paper-chases."

Amid these objective adventures there came more and more those same subjective states of mind that, as a child, he had known in the earliest years at Mead Wells. All lost ancient things, all things to be, and flowers, and solemn woods, and changing skies, began to allure him more than eggs of birds. The mystery and vast antiquity of fossils began to enthral him more than their collection. Within him an extraordinary and profound sense of personal kinship with nature grew steadily. He sat in church, and during the sermons and the uninteresting parts he became a visionary, and

dreamed, living far away in his spirit in sweet secluded places in the woods known to himself. These feelings and dreamings he kept deeply hidden, even from his mother.

But Kirk and Ted together, as comrades, revelled in the long summer holidays. The great orders of the day were "excursions"—mostly fishing jaunts. Kirk had given to these important matters much attention. He went to the library, where could be seen a great county map that showed all the ancient stately homes, the fish-ponds, ornamental lakes, rivers, streams, and moats. In the dictionary he found the names of the old families, and he wrote polite boyish letters asking for himself and his brother permission to fish. In this way he received the *entrée* to private waters that were quite unknown to other boys. He made Ted keep absolutely secret from their friends all knowledge of these places.

Never would they forget one of these glorious days. It was in the summer, and when they had been nearly three years at Severnly. Kirk had found a lake that looked most enticing, even on the map. By himself he had gone forth miles, and been away all day. He had reconnoitred round an old estate, listened keenly for keepers, slipped inside a dense wood that curved downhill, and so made his way stealthily beneath cover, until he stood in deep shadow at the margin of the water, and saw, across the cloud- and sun-reflecting lake, a green smooth slope, and beyond that the long rich Elizabethan façade, standing so old and stately in Italian gardens—set with white statues, lawns and terraces, and glowing red flower-beds. On the right and left were mighty oaks and elms, beyond these were more and more great trees, and beneath them and between them were scattered many fallow-deer, moving in and out of shade and sunshine.

In the lake, what "risings" and movements of fish saw he! His heart stood still with fierce suppressed excitement when he discovered that the moveless brown thing in the water was a most huge carp, idly basking.

He went back through the still and silent wood, gained the path, and then walked home at a great rate, making up letters as he went. On arrival he took a sheet of his father's note-paper, and wrote, in large round upright hand, a very well-composed letter to General Sir George Wellby, informing him that if the desired permission for a day's fishing were given, he, Kirk, gave his word of honour that all undersized fish would be put back, all gates would be closed carefully after opening, no paper would be left about, no game would be disturbed, and, if he allowed them to use the punt, then they would clean it out when they had finished using it. He added that his brother and himself were good swimmers.

A few days later, Kirk was laughing and leaping round Ted, and punching him here and there. Ted also was laughing.

"You've got leave? you old beggar——"

"Yes!" Kirk thrust the thick crested note into Ted's hands, and they read it together.

"Stratton House,

"August 15, 19—.

"General Sir George Wellby accepts Mr. Clinton's conditions and has pleasure in giving him permission to fish on one day, in company with his brother. Mr. Clinton must, if required, produce this permission for the information of Sir George's gamekeepers."

The note was written in a lady's delicate clear handwriting. Kirk immediately showed it to his mother; she was pleased and much amused, and with her help he wrote his reply.

For the day of the excursion Mrs. Clinton exempted the two boys from family prayers. She came down very much earlier than usual, and cut their sandwiches, packed up generous pieces of cake, and gave each a bottle of raspberry wine. She bade them be very careful in the punt. She wished them good luck, and in tremendous spirits each hugged and kissed her, and then they set off. Their fishing baskets were crammed with tackle, worms, wasp-grubs, es-

sence of Tolu paste, gentles, and every material of war that Kirk could invent and lay hands on; and Ted had by some unheard of means borrowed his father's landing net—Kirk had his own. The day was perfect for the sport. A warm southwest wind continuously and very gently carried up great clouds, bright and soft. Their light translucent shadows dreamed and stole on over the scented heated woodlands. Stratton House stood seven miles from Severnly, and it was after nine before the brothers passed over the fine grass of the park, to halt, well back from the willow herb and rushes that marked the water's edge. Though hot and eager, they stood still and gazed. How beautiful was the lake! . . . Then they chose places near each other, approached warily, knelt down, and began feverishly to "put together." Before Kirk ended his elaborate preparations Ted "pulled up" and called to him. Kirk dropped his own rod when he saw Ted actually playing a fish.

"Give him line! give him line, Ted!" cried he softly, and came up with cat-like steps and took up the landing net. In a minute both boys, their hearts beating with excitement, were admiring a silvery one-pounder.

Before he put his own line in Kirk netted a second fish for Ted.

Until noon each had equal luck. Kirk had moved further from his brother, when he heard him call, "Kirk! Kirk! Quick!" He went swiftly to him.

"I've got something *frightful* on! Look at that! Whatever can it be?"

The slender rod was heavily bent, the line slanted away far out into deep water, did not move about or rush through the water, but continually jerked and twitched strongly.

"Keep a steady pull on him! Keep a steady pull on him!" advised Kirk. And presently a powerful ambling movement commenced. Backwards and forwards, now this way, now that way went the line, going further and further out in the lake, until Ted's arms ached delightfully. Suddenly a

strange head showed, then came a flash of black and silver side.

"It's a simply enormous eel!" declared Kirk, and Ted kept up the pressure, until the taut line neared the water-edge.

Again and again Kirk tried to net the powerful creature. It was no sooner half in than out!

"Oh, Kirk, we shall lose him! It's only roach tackle!" cried the anxious Ted. Kirk threw the net down and began furiously to unlace his boots. "Keep him going gently, old man!" He kicked one boot off—a violent lashing began at the water edge—and Kirk jumped in, one boot on, one off. He was up to his waist, but, net in hand, he part pushed, kicked, netted and struggled the great eel through the reeds on to the grass, where it was lively as a thick snake, and bit savagely at the boys. Ted put a foot on it. A moment and it slid free; he stood on it with both feet—the line was broken. Kirk fiercely groped in his pockets. Ted got a foot on the eel. In a moment Kirk on his knees cut the neck deep.

"Oh!" exclaimed Ted, jumping off, and shocked at so much blood. "It's like killing something!"

"Rather!" triumphantly cried Kirk. "Why! he tried to bite us like anything! Oh, I am so *glad* we've got him! He's the biggest thing you've ever caught! Bet he's five pounds!" He washed the blood from the knife, and then took off his wet clothes and wrung them out in the sunshine. "I'll bet even father would like to have caught it!"

"Good old Kirkie!" laughed Ted. "This is sport!"

After this exciting event, they covered their fish with more grass to shade them from the sun and keep the wasps off.

Then for some time the fish ceased feeding, so the brothers ate their lunch, with that rich enjoyment of food that all healthy boys possess, accentuated to-day by the romance of the *al fresco* and their splendid sport.

Afterwards, for some reason occult to Ted, Kirk made himself as respectable as possible. He washed his boots, and

carefully cleaned and re-cleaned his grubby nails with the small scissors given him by his mother.

"My word! *you* young gentlemen know what you're about!"

The boys were startled; behind them stood a boy and a big keeper, and the man had quietly pushed the grass off the two fine heaps of fish. He now carefully put it back. Kirk produced the letter. The keeper read it slowly, and said—

"All right, young gentlemen."

Then he paused, again looked at the two heaps, and said—

"Miss Madge would like to see *them*, I'll warrant."

"Is Miss Madge the little girl I saw on the pony?" asked Kirk.

"Yes, that's her, sir. I'll send up word to the house. She wants to do some fishing, but we've got nought but pike-trimmers. I'll warrant Miss Madge 'ud like to see them fish."

"We shall be very pleased indeed if she will come and look."

In the afternoon the clouds had vanished, the day had heated up, and the shadows of the great elms had grown longer, when the boys saw her coming down with her father. As they approached near, Ted and Kirk raised their silver-badged caps, and smiled. Kirk saw that she was indeed very, very pretty, very graceful and dark.

"And you are Mr. Kirkpatrick?" said the general, also smiling, with a secret amusement; and he next held quite a professional conversation on fishing, Kirk respectfully, but freely and very positively and firmly, imparting his knowledge and beliefs. The little girl listened, and watched Kirk.

"This is my daughter Marjorie."

The two boys again raised their caps, and Kirk, after he had shown her the dead shining fish, and heard her exclamations, asked her shyly—

"Would you like to fish with my rod? The fish are beginning to feed again. . . . I'll show you how."

"*Thank* you! Oh, papa! I can, can't I? And shall we go in the punt? Oh yes, dad! you must come in the punt with us! You know you promised!"

The fine big man, smiling, was drawn in the desired direction, and Kirk, who had by his own eagerness increased her desire, gathered his things hastily and followed.

"I'll bait and take off for her, sir!"

"Oh, how kind of you! Thank you! Tom never lets me touch his rod, but he never catches any!"

The general took the quaint paddle, and under Kirk's very exact directions they presently anchored quietly before a favourable opening in the lilies.

The general lit a cheroot. In the meanwhile Kirk baited, explained to Marjorie, and then threw in with his very best skill. He placed the rod in the small girl's hands, showing her how to hold the running line, and how she was to "strike." She asked Kirk many questions, taking up a more reserved manner with him.

The proverbial luck of beginners held good and the float soon went under. Madge struck, cried out, but did quickly what Kirk told her. A minute later he netted a panting fish, which escaped his hands and jumped about the big punt-bottom before it lay gasping.

Then with a pained expression the child hastily put down the rod, clasped her hands to her bosom, then stood up, turned to her father and buried her lovely little face on his shoulder. Kirk heard her stifled exclamations.

"Oh! oh, how cruel! Oh, I can't bear it! Please put it back, poor, poor thing! Oh! *please* put it in!"

Kirk glanced with perplexity at her father and received a whimsical nod.

He stooped down and the little girl heard a splash.

"There! silly!" Her father patted the kind little form. "It's back in the water! You're a fine fisherman, you are!"

She raised her face and smiled apologetically, very shyly and deliciously, at Kirk.

"You don't mind, please? It seems so cruel."

"It's not really," said Kirk, very anxiously, and much disturbed. "My father says they can't feel, and it's not cruel."

Marjorie and her father had long gone, and the August evening drew in. The boys were deeply loth to cease, but, growing hungrier, at last they stopped fishing, loaded themselves up exultantly, and began to tramp back in the dewy dusky eve. They made short cuts through deep woodland and over silent turf, while the bats clicked round them overhead. They arrived long after dark, with aching shoulders; fagged but triumphant. What a moment it was when they gruntingly lifted off the bags and baskets. Even father went to the kitchen to see the haul, and Kirk, with feelings suppressed, replied respectfully to his rather kindly questions. Then mother made them have supper before they went into the important matter of weighing the fish. They ate in the kitchen but in great state, for they had walked into thick mud in a dark woodland lane, and they were very late, fishy, garrulous, and quite unfit for the dining-room. Mary came down in her little dressing gown to see Ted's and Kirk's fish; with their heads the brothers "bunted" her rather boisterously till she took refuge with her mother; then they kissed her good-night, and fell to again upon the especially good supper. They ate enormously, and when mother had gone, they chaffed the maids, argued vehemently, good-humouredly, learnedly, as to the honour of the eel capture; and then, supper finished, while Kirk was down in the cellar weighing and gloating over the fish, Ted fell fast asleep in his chair.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT this time Kirk received a first good mark from his father. Mr. Clinton was a keen fisherman, and very skilled with the dry fly. In his younger days, he and his wife together had spent holidays in Scotland amid the banks and braes, where fishing is a most properly important matter. Trout and grayling were, however, much preserved in the neighbourhood of Severnly, and Mr. Clinton, despite the financial situation, had early subscribed to the rental of a piece of good water shared by half a dozen men. In excuse it may be said that fishing, skating, and perhaps theology, were his only hobbies.

Partly upon business, partly upon pleasure, Mr. Clinton was to drive out ten miles one spring day near Easter, to a broad brook that rippled and gloomed through a deep undulating woodland. The casual groom being unwell, and Kirk handy, Mr. Clinton suddenly bade the boy make ready. Kirk required no urging. He rushed up to his room, made himself "fit to go with father," and then caught up his own new fly-rod and ran downstairs.

Outside, he climbed up smartly into the dog-cart and took his seat. He was in a state of silent, eminent, and surprised high spirits. As they drove along he replied wisely and attentively to his father's occasional remarks; and half-way, his father, after some instructions, placed the reins in Kirk's hands and gave him a lesson in the art of driving.

The keen primitive hunting instinct in the boy taught him intuitively exactly what to do in attending upon his father. He landed the fish with no small skill, never got in the way,

stealthily and without shaking them climbed two awkward trees that overhung big pools, to release his father's casts from the twigs, and descended each time without having disturbed the feeding fish. He stepped with the wary step of his father, took cover with equal facility, and was in fact a very good ghillie. At lunch—an excellent meal in Kirk's opinion—his father warmed a little, and discoursed on flies, knots, casts, waters of many sorts, and presently found himself putting up a two-fly cast for his son. Mr. Clinton critically examined the new rod.

"Aunt Athorpe sent it me," said Kirk, "and I can cast a bit now, for dace, you know, father. . . . Auntie asked what I would like for my birthday. So I wrote a proper specification of the kind I wanted. . . ."

"Indeed!" Mr. Clinton met his son's eyes for a moment, and slightly smiled.

"It had £3 on it . . . I didn't know it would be all that. . . ."

"It was marked £3, Kirkpatrick, and you were unaware that it would be so costly," said Mr. Clinton in a manner by no means unkindly.

"Yes, father," said Kirk, respectfully.

While Mr. Clinton tried the rod, he thought rather bitterly about Alice Athorpe—she who had opposed his marriage with Agnes. . . . But coming back to things in hand, he spoke—

"Too whippy . . . really a grayling rod . . . humph! You must not whip, but throw; this way . . . so . . . so, allowing fully to the rod its natural swing . . . there, hold it thus. Take it——"

Kirk, under his father's somewhat impatient but skilled tuition, learnt quickly to throw a fly very fairly well. The father felt a new and strange interest in his son. After himself taking a very large trout—which caused Kirk the most intense but sternly suppressed excitement—Mr. Clinton ceased fishing and sat down beneath a hawthorn. He drew out his cheroot case. He bade Kirk cast just above where the

ripple died into the smooth deep water, and while his father rested, Kirk captured his first trout.

From this day, Ted, who had been his father's favourite—or, rather, who had always received more notice than Kirk—became unjustly neglected. Mr. Clinton in the holidays frequently took his second son with him when visiting works and when fishing. The new friendship was limited strictly to self-interests. Kirk never felt affection towards his father, and, quite unconsciously, the boy assumed a prematurely masculine, serious, and business-like manner when with him. Often the two were silent for hours. Kirk was aware that his handiness with the net or gaff, his fishing skill, and his precocious interest in civil engineering works, paid for these coveted jaunts.

Mrs. Clinton also was not deceived. She saw clearly the great mental and emotional gap between the boy and his father. Her husband's would-be praise only saddened her. One day he had just returned, and stood by her. They spoke of Kirk.

"Yes. He has been with me all day. He possesses a brain and a hand. He has more tact than Ted. Never annoys me by speaking—unless there really is something to be said. There's much more in the boy than I thought . . ." Mr. Clinton paused, and then added, with a slight tone of surprise and pique, "But callous, Agnes, a strangely unaffectionate, reserved boy—not frank—neither like you nor like me!"

"Kirk? Oh no! Why, dearest, Kirk is the most . . ." She turned and put her hand on her husband's shoulder. "But you and he have never quite understood each other, dear. You will come together more as he grows older."

Mr. Clinton made no reply; but he smiled doubtfully, glancing downwards.

In Russia during many winter months, and twice in Canada, Clinton greatly enjoyed long spells of skating.

Clever when a boy, and well-taught by his father, he had never missed a single brief English opportunity for practice, and now he was, without doubt, an expert of the very first rank.

For skating, Clinton would give any member of his staff a holiday, if it possibly could be allowed; and while the ice bore, the office saw but little of himself. In Canada he learnt scientific intricacy and speed; at home he had acquired precision; in Russia he was captivated by elegance and carriage, passion of movement, beautiful singularity of style; and he had mastered all the technique of this sport.

After a very heavy snowstorm, followed by a week of hard frost, the Clinton family, with other residents who were privileged, went out a few miles to Coombe Water. This large secluded mere was in the deer-park of the Earl of Severnly. To-day it showed a wide and black polished surface, part surrounded by snowy slopes, and part enclosed by noble hanging woods. The hoar frost each night had done fairy-like work and made a greater change; and now the white woods, the exquisite frosted trees, the deeply covered slopes, the black shining lake, the pale-blue sky, made a pure winter transformation that enchanted.

A kindling of excitement filled Clinton as he noted the absolute perfection of the ice. His tall approaching figure, of a severe strong grace, his Russian furred cap, and the closely-fitting continental winter-costume—giving freedom to the muscular but finely-modelled thigh and leg—had been noted by many of those already on the lake. The Earl of Severnly's party and his heir were mingling on the ice with every one, with that freedom and jollity given only by good sport. As Clinton put on his skates the word went round, and a general movement left clear a great central space of ice. That movement also thrilled Clinton. A brilliant Russian scene flashed across his vision, he stood up, tested the firm attachment of the blades, and then, without visible effort, with head well up, shoulders back, and hands grace-

fully raised, without a lift of the bright blades that each closely followed each like two sinuous silver fishes, he was gliding forward swifter and swifter from the lakeside, in long beautiful flamboyant curves, of which his slowly but greatly swaying body seemed absolutely a part. A minute later, while in the centre of an immense sweeping curve, at high speed without effort, with scarcely a visible lift of the blades, the long scroll he drew was rushing suddenly as it were *from* his front blade, and Agnes heard an exclamation—

“Great Ged! He’s flying, *backwards!* Did *you* see him reverse? Did you?”

“Don’t speak! it’s too lovely!” . . . said a young girl.

Clinton as he swept backwards lowered his hands slowly, folded his arms easily behind his back, made a lightning volteface, and then, daringly, at great speed for such figures, he traced immense “Grape Vines.” His agile rushing form made incredible angles with the ice. Like a swift in the air he wheeled, turned and swept—reversing, careering, spinning, darting—in beautiful scrolls and patterns that grew more and more intricate—seemingly effortless—but were ever exceedingly graceful. Then with flickering skates, in an abandon and *furore* of wonderful rapid spirals and eddies of all sizes, he drew nearer and nearer to his wife, and Ted in ecstasy cried—

“Look out! mother! He’s doing the ‘Water Spout!’”

Clinton raised his arms fully, threw back his head and spun violently, the nebulous pillar of his body oscillating rhythmically and moving on in a smaller and a smaller whirl—ice powder and a rushing sound rose from his skates—until his indistinguishable blades made one solid flashing in the sun, and then suddenly there was no sound, and with hands poised, he was seen floating towards Agnes on the same graceful, curious tandem-glide by which he had commenced his beautiful, swift, and accomplished figures.

Energetic clapping of hands and loud shouts of “Bravo!

Bravo! Encore!" broke from the spectators, and Clinton, standing by Agnes, turned round, panting a little, smiling rather sardonically at himself, and bowed twice to the people on the ice.

Kirk had not before had the opportunity to learn skating. Winters at both Mead Wells and Severnly were mild. Severe frost was needful to give bearing-ice on their deep waters, and last year there had been two days only of skating; in which Ted learned a good deal, but Kirk at that time had a sprained knee. To-day, Mr. Clinton undertook Kirk's tuition. The boy walked nearly a mile over the snow, to the quiet and smaller end of the lake, and there put on his skates, and soon descried his father and the occupied chair-sledge he propelled, coming down the lake like the wind. In front of Clinton, on this light sleigh, sat his wife, well wrapped up in splendid Russian sables.

Clinton now took his boy in hand. He readjusted a skate, took Kirk out on to the ice, and in a few clear sentences, spoken slowly and repeated twice, he explained the principle of simple forward skating, of balance, of correct positions for the feet and heels and head and arms. He then retired a dozen yards and ordered Kirk, "Now, begin."

Extreme crossness and contempt greeted every error, every painful fall. No time was given to rub acutely aching knees or hips. The cutting sarcasm and quietly rough speech roused fierce and silent resentment in Kirk. He did not feel the pain of falls. Acutely stimulated, he boldly did what he was told. He fell, sprawled, scrambled up, succeeded, failed again and fell, got up and tried again, went better, better, too quick, another severe fall! up again! and heard his father's hard, clarion voice,

"Why will you not obey me? Keep the heels down!"

Then more careful work, and now he was actually skating! twenty good strokes, then bump again! on the same knee. Up again! A hundred yards this time! Too much speed—bump—bump! Mrs. Clinton did not say a word, but

she could not bear to stay and look on, and as Ted skated away with her she had tears in her eyes, but in her heart a great secret pride in her boy's fortitude.

By-and-by the bruised Kirk skated to her and beside her, full of exultation.

"Look! mother darling! Father says it's the quickest he's ever taught any one! Oh! isn't it perfect! Let me push mother, Ted, there's a good old chap!"

It really was a remarkable performance. It was due to exact obedience and compliance with his father's clear scientific instruction, and also to a certain absolute fearlessness under excitement that Kirk inherited from him.

CHAPTER VIII

STELLA, their adored baby sister, that little dark, lovely, serious child, with the rare heavenly smile, died in the following autumn, after less than a week of pain.

On the day of the funeral Kirk was upstairs making ready for the sad rite, when he received an extreme shock. He heard for the first time in his life his mother begin to cry, overcome, lamenting to herself. The boy—in agony of mind—pushed her door open and saw her standing at the toilet table, her back towards him. She was in her corset, and he beheld his mother's graceful form, her beautiful arms, neck, and shoulders, and her dear head bent in such grief.

Not breathing for fear and pain, he ran downstairs and rushed to his father—

“Father! mother's crying oh, so awfully—do go to her!”

Mr. Clinton hastily went upstairs, and after a few minutes the sound, so terrible to Kirk, ceased, and he went into the empty morning-room, and wiped his eyes, and thought blindly. This was his first personal experience of great sorrow.

After this, Kirk for weeks furtively watched his mother, himself almost afraid to be too affectionate—for fear he reminded her. But his mother knew what was in his heart.

When near, he always threaded her needles for her, and he undertook eagerly any little commissions. He sought and gathered for her the first wild violets and primroses. He took endless pains with anything she asked him to do. In moving the dining-room furniture a large white patch was scraped in the dark dado. The handsome, rather expensive paper had been chosen by Mrs. Clinton. She looked at the

blemish with chagrin, and wondered what could be done. A brilliant idea came to Kirk.

"Mother!" exclaimed he, "I'll mend it for you, you see!"

He brought pencil, brushes, and his small water-colour box. In an hour he had drawn in the pattern and painted it so cleverly that no blemish could be seen, unless one searched closely. His mother knew why he had taken such pains—and although no shadow of favoritism was ever shown by her, yet she knew how he revered her; she alone knew how the passionate, critical boy restrained himself for her sake—and between them grew an ardent, silent love—very understanding and deep in a boy of fifteen.

Mrs. Clinton, in the spring, was ordered change of air and scene. Her husband was anxious about her drooping health, and insisted upon a specialist's opinion. This man advised complete absence from her husband and Severnly. She must go to a lively place, and meet as many fresh people as possible. He was very positive, and Clinton acquiesced. Before things were settled, Alice Athorpe wrote, pressing Agnes to come and spend the London season with her. To this the specialist agreed, saying it was just the thing. Clinton was not on very good terms with his wife's aunt. He and she were rather too temperamentally alike. Both were too positive, and, like positive nodes, they repelled each other. Clinton had preserved for years a feeling of enmity against Mrs. Athorpe, dating from that time when she had quietly opposed his love for Agnes. Her husband, uncle to Agnes, was now long dead, and had left her very wealthy. Clinton had battled later with Mrs. Athorpe over the conversion of his wife. He was not very satisfied about the proposed visit. He did not realise that Alice Athorpe was far too good, frank, benevolent, and noble-minded a woman to attempt to criticise or disparage him to his wife. But Clinton did know that his wife had always greatly enjoyed visits to Inverness Terrace; he was well aware that Agnes was her

favourite niece, and that they were very fond of each other; so he fell in with the new proposal.

Mary accompanied her mother, and a little later, in the Easter holidays, the two boys had a royal fortnight in town—under the auspices of the splendid old lady, who sent them forth each morning with their curly heads full of instructions, and their pockets full of money, the sole law of the Medes and Persians being their punctual return in good time for dinner. With mother they went to their first theatre, and saw the Mikado; and Kirk lived in paradise. The long railway journeys there and back—by themselves—were not the least of the pleasures of the boys.

May and June were very hot that year, and when Mrs. Clinton returned she still looked over-transparent and very delicate.

In August the family went to the coast of Cardigan, to Abermawr, a place they had once before visited. Abermawr provided beautiful mountain scenery, good air and sea-bathing, trout and salmon fishing for Mr. Clinton, and safe sands and delights for all the children. Abermawr, with its great wooden bridge, the far-famed estuary, the ring of mountains, the black cattle on the golden sands, was a quiet unknown place in those days.

Kirk had been away from school during the last month of that summer term. Apparently quite well, he had, upon a hot holiday in July, gone a very long tramp, but he dragged himself back at sundown in a state of great exhaustion. During the night he was seized with a strange, sudden illness, and before morning he was delirious, with a very high temperature.

His mother nursed him night and day. Never would he forget her cool, gentle hands, her dear hands, as she attended him, and put wet muslins on his burning head.

In quite a few days the boy was out of bed, but very pale and weak. The family doctor was a clever man, but was

much puzzled, and informed Mrs. Clinton that the nearest malady he could think of was slight meningitis, accelerated by Kirk's over-exertion in the sun; and he asked if the boy had been reading or working too much? They decided Kirk should miss the last three weeks of the term.

Mr. Clinton, Ted, Mary, and the maid, returned to Severnly looking brown and well, but Mrs. Clinton with Kirk remained at the seaside for another two weeks. Those were fourteen days that Kirk never forgot during the rest of his life. His mother read Tennyson to him, and he and she went delicious walks together, in that noble scenery that stirred the boy so mightily, and they made several incomparable boating trips across the estuary to Arthog. They were rowed there—with the help of Kirk at the tiller—by an honest old sea-captain, who lived in a wee white cottage high upon the rugged mountains that descend at Abermawr. Agnes Clinton and her boy showed each other all their love, and Kirk was happy and entranced as a lover with the beloved. Of this mother and son it might have been said also with some truth: "We see things with the same eyes; what you find lovely, I find lovely; God has made our souls of one piece."

Besides his mother's influence, the church, his father's effect, heredity of lineage, the life at school, and the peculiarly rich heavy-timbered countryside—there were other powers moulding Kirk's innate separate character while yet it remained pliant.

Kirk had a friend, Mr. Cecil, of the Severnly Library. The boy shared the old man's love for flowers. Behind the buildings of aged yellow stone was a large garden, so quaint and sweet as to be comparable with that at Mead Wells.

When Kirk was eleven he had first looked through this library window, seen a peep of flowers, and exclaimed—

"Oh! you've got woolly-wort!"

"Why, so I have, young sir."

"Might I please have a bit, Mr. Cecil? a little root—I want it for some one, very much."

"What! What! What! young man?"

"Only for my mother," said Kirk, softly, and going a little red. The old man keenly looked at him before he spoke.

"Why, so you shall, so you shall."

He began slowly moving round the counter, leaving in charge his somewhat brow-beaten assistant; and that morning Kirk and Mr. Cecil became fast friends. The boy proudly took home a regal bouquet of many flowers from the old man's greenhouses; also some love-in-a-mist, and a good root of woolly woundwort.

This affection for flowers gave Kirk unexpected friends. By some means he was on great terms with the Earl of Severnly's horticulturist—a decayed Scots Master of Arts, who ruled over certain magnificent, tropical greenhouses. And then, too, there was a dear old maiden lady who lived at Woodlandfording, six miles away, among immemorial meads and forest-lands, that sloped down to where the shining river dreamed through rich meadows. Kirk had a written permission to roam her estates, and specific leave to gather white violets in a certain pine-wood. He was chary and wise of over-visiting, and went but thrice a year, and by agreement took tea solemnly and on his best behaviour with the solitary old lady, and was served by a real hereditary footman in a very grand old historic house.

Mr. Cecil refused books if he thought them not good for the boy or girl who asked for them. Even at twenty years, many were still boys and girls in his old eyes. If they asked for books of which he disapproved, he first regarded these young persons severely from above his spectacles, then through his spectacles; and then he would ramble off, and having made a long mock-search, he would return, look at them fixedly, and announce gently, "Not in." If it were Kirk, he would produce some other book, and add—

"But read this, Master Clinton. Beautiful English, beautiful book . . . do you good."

"Oh, all right, thank you so much, Mr. Cecil," Kirk would reply, and then perhaps ask him—

"How are the greenhouses?"

"Too busy now . . . too busy . . . but come round this evening . . . new *Alopecurus sphixiata retroflexa* . . . just out this morning . . . lovely thing . . . you shall see it. At six o'clock, please. . . . My kindest regards to your mother."

Mr. Cecil chose books carefully for Kirk, and often gave him gentle reprimands and hints that his speed was far, far too great. "Can't remember it all if you read like that, young man." But Kirk combated these checks by stating an inventory of the book he had returned—the old man listening gravely, sometimes making sound or learned comments, often a little beyond Kirk's mind, but not beyond his deep respect and thirst to know.

Kirk for years had felt an increasing unconscious pleasure in Sundays when stress of weather or other hindrances prevented the weekly visit to Salbury, for then the Clintons went to Church of England service at Severnly Abbey.

All those years of Gregorian chanting had disciplined his musical ear to reject anything but the best. That music of the Apostolic Church was so pure, so classic, so clear; but it was chastened by extreme coldness and austerity, even when joyful; hence, and for other reasons that became stronger, Kirk always had been delighted secretly when circumstances made the family attend the Abbey service. The immense organ was two centuries old. It filled entirely the west end of the abbey. The glorious music from this great and mellowed instrument specially filled Kirk with ecstasy, and had done so since he first heard it as a boy of nine. One entered the Abbey from the west and passed beneath the gallery of the organ. Looking behind and up, one saw the dark wood of the long gallery, wonderfully carved with

groups of old viols and cellos, bassoons and drums, trumpets and pipes, all in such high relief as to seem really sheafed and bound there by the flowing ribbons carved around them. The great chords and storm-sounds of the diapason shook Kirk to his soul; and when he was still a child, the silvery voices of the host of martial pipes had made him fly across the heaven of his imagination, naked, shouting, and brandishing a spear.

For Kirk was English in his heart's core, and to him the Apostolic Church was now beginning to appear as a religion that was young, weak, despised, and lowly, amid the over-towering traditions, the great fanes, the glorious works of stone that stood filled with the memories of ancient England—the cathedrals and the abbeys filled with great solemnity, and standing in strength like vast oaks of the old forests. Kirk loved increasingly the past, the ancient, the strong, and the enduring.

Above him, crossed on the naked stonework of the soaring walls, his eyes had dwelt often upon the bloody gauzy silks brought back from terrible Isandlwana; there, all fearfully torn and stained, they hung in memory of the heroic dead English; and from childhood to boyhood he had looked at them always with a deep reverence and excitement.

In the high, purple-stoned chancel, the forms of noble men in armour lay by their dames and great ladies, and far above them spouted the exquisite groining of the roof.

Behind him the boy could feel the presence of the fiery beautiful poet, looking from his pure marble, with lion-like eyes, the lips exquisite, calm, and balanced in superb thought. Always, after service, as he went slowly down the crowded aisle to the western exit, he had gazed at this face.

CHAPTER IX

THE Easter holidays were again approaching; it was the middle of a week, when, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, a knock came at the class-room door, and the old dignified school porter, his breast decorated with a row of medals, brought in a note to Kirk's form master, who read it gravely, beckoned to Kirk, and then said in a low tone—

"Your mother is ill, Clinton; they want you at home, you can go now."

Kirk's face went deathly pale, and he left the room.

This incident had been preceded by a painful week. The Clinton household had been upset—doctors had come and gone, two professional nurses were living in the house. Mrs. Clinton had been seriously ill for three weeks. On the Sunday evening she had, however, rallied wonderfully, miraculously it seemed to her husband. The "Laying on of hands" and the "Anointing" had by her wish taken place that afternoon; and, on Monday, the boys went back to school with lighter hearts. Kirk could not, dare not, imagine the actual possibility of his mother's death.

On the night of their second recall from school the two brothers slept at a neighbouring house—a sympathetic arrangement made by one of Mrs. Clinton's more intimate friends, for their own home was too upset; the nurses took up a bedroom, and, in addition, Mrs. Athorpe, in haste and anxiety, had arrived the week previous, and was staying at the "Gates" with her old maid.

Next morning, while Ted, Kirk, and Mary were together in the morning-room, their father entered and closed the door behind him. His face looked aged and wrinkled, his eyes were red, wide open, and despairing. He almost raved—

"Oh! your dear mother; kneel down, all of you; her beautiful limbs, she has no more use in them. Oh! she was always so pure . . ." and fresh tears streamed down the man's face, while Kirk began breathing quickly and faintly—for an awful fear now held him. He, too, prayed to God as he had never before prayed.

Their father soon left them—Ted and Mary both crying, Kirk utterly overcome. The March wind and rain never ceased violently pressing and drumming on the streaming window-panes. An hour later Alice Athorpe came down to the children. She was a tower of strength, and her strong beautiful old face was quite calm.

"Ted, dear, your mother wants to speak to you; you must be very quiet." They left the room. After a few minutes she returned alone, and now she also was crying. "Kirk, my dear boy, will you come now?"

He followed her up the broad stairs of the house; his aunt took him past people on the big landing—a professional nurse, and poor old faithful Jane standing there mutely, and others he did not know or notice. Strange tables and chairs and things were avoided, and before Mrs. Athorpe opened the door, she said, "Don't give way, Kirk, be brave." She admitted him, and herself remained outside.

The ordered room was quite still, and here the wind made no noise. A bright fire gleamed on the old and elegant furniture.

Kirk stood, then knelt down beside his mother, to be near her and hear her faint words; she seemed to be so sunk down into the large, low bed. Her pallid face shone with perspiration, her lips were blue; she had too plainly greatly suffered. But her grey eyes were so steadfast, sweet, and so earnest as she looked at him lovingly. Kirk kissed her most gently, and she smiled very slowly and closed her eyes; she spoke so faintly that Kirk held his breath, and leaned his head down very close to her.

"My dearest . . . boy . . . Kirk . . . dear . . . where

is your hand?" whispered she. "Father . . . never desert him . . . promise me, dear."

"I promise, mother" . . . she could scarcely see him.

"You will never, desert him, dear?"

"No, mother. No, no."

"Take care of Mary and Ted; help them, for my sake."

"I will, mother."

"Always be pure, dear, for my sake . . . dear, you will never, forget me?"

"Mother! Mother!"

And now his own tears rained down, and he swallowed, and swallowed them back, and hastily wiped his face on a corner of the sheet; but his mother's eyes were still closed.

"Good-bye; put your arms, round my, neck, Kirk."

He kissed her, very, very gently, she was so exhausted, and her eyes remained closed. He heard the door open, but could not look round. Mrs. Athorpe came and whispered to him. She took his hand. "You must leave her now, dear, she wishes to see Mary."

That evening Agnes Clinton again rallied, and at a quarter to eleven the two overwrought boys went away with renewed hope, and slept at their neighbour's home. They awoke at six o'clock next morning and soon hastened towards the "Gates." When near home they met the boot-boy. He stopped and spoke to Kirk—

"Your mother's dead, Master Kirk."

"No. No, she's not!"

"She is dead, Master Kirk."

Kirk struck him for saying such a thing, and ran on trembling, and inwardly moaning.

Yes, she was dead.

CHAPTER X

IN the summer holidays Kirk received an invitation to spend a month at a Mrs. Nugent's home. Her letters to Kirk and his father arrived on a Tuesday. Kirk hoped earnestly that he might be allowed to go; for these past four months at the "Gates" had been very sad, and his father remained in a morose and broken state of mind. Mr. Clinton's eccentricities had greatly increased. Lately he had interdicted bacon on Sunday mornings. It was not fitting to eat the flesh of an unclean animal prior to partaking of Holy Communion. For some strange reason he had insisted on the boys' "washing" being put into his own wardrobes instead of into their usual place in Ted's and Kirk's rooms. Each morning they had to stand outside his door and ask for a collar, or whatever they might want, and often they had to wait. Ted took this philosophically, but Kirk was much annoyed. Yet, because of pity for his father and his own deep dejection, he said nothing.

Kirk slept in a room next to Mr. Clinton, and to-night he awoke and heard his father walking to and fro in his bedroom, speaking to himself, and mourning terribly. These faint sounds in the night persisted for over an hour. At length Kirk left his bed and pressed his ear to the wall. He could distinguish some of his father's words. He longed to alleviate this sorrow, though he himself shared it silently and acutely; but he knew he could do nothing. He must wake Mary and ask her to go to father. Since their mother's death Mary had again become her father's favourite. Kirk wakened his sister.

Mary knocked at her father's door, and waited, standing

in her little dressing gown, her glossy dark hair curling on her shoulders, and after a time she gained admittance. Her brother stood about in his room. No sounds came through the wall, nor did he put his ear to it. He surmised that Mary was on her father's knee, her arms round his neck, comforting and soothing him, just as Kirk had chanced to see her do a week or two after the funeral.

Mr. Clinton had received Mrs. Nugent's letter with languid doubt. He thought it not right to separate the members of a family on the Lord's Day. But then, he considered Mrs. Nugent had been his wife's friend, and she and her daughters were members of the Salbury Church. They lived in a good house in the best part of that old town, famous for brine-baths. Socially Mrs. Nugent was perhaps a little higher, certainly more important and wealthy, than had been her friend Agnes Clinton. Kirk had been a favourite with her. She disagreed with Mr. Clinton's ways and notions, but she never spoke of these things to Kirk. Her two daughters were home from France, where they were being educated. Her boy Dick, intended for the Army, was also at home. He and Kirk had been school friends for a year. They were rather too daring and mischievous when together, for they emulated each other in adventure. There had been trouble three years ago when Kirk and Dick were discovered walking boldly and quickly in rubber pumps, round the verges of the high slate roof of Mrs. Nugent's house. There had also been an affair over cigarettes, Dick becoming so ill as to alarm Kirk very much and send him to Mrs. Nugent for assistance. And again, there had been a more disgraceful affair with a fat butcher on a tramcar top. Kirk had made two glass pea-shooters, of unusual length, very perfectly embedded in putty between split bamboos, the latter neatly refitted together, and bound with waxed thread. These things looked like walking-sticks. The boys, with hands full of small wet balls of putty, sat upon another tramcar at the passing

place. When the butcher on his car began to move away, a terrible fusillade of hard putty opened accurately on him. Trams had been stopped. A pursuit of police had run the delinquents to earth. Mrs. Nugent had made the boys apologise, and for two days had put them "in disgrace," but she had told it all to Mrs. Clinton as a secret. Kirk, not knowing this, had been deeply grateful and the two boys had made solemn vows of reform to Mrs. Nugent. But these things were soon forgiven, Agnes and Mrs. Nugent had laughed together over them for each possessed a keen sense of humour, and a mutual understanding of boys.

After holding Kirk in suspense for three days, Mr. Clinton gave him the desired permission. The only condition was that on Sundays he must sit in church with his own family.

Maud Nugent was nearly eighteen, and a graceful tall girl, and Kirk was a slim hardy boy of fifteen. She was a sweet-minded, rather serious girl, very frank and sensible, yet often dreamy. Mrs. Nugent and Kirk loved to hear her play and sing little French songs. On re-meeting Kirk Maud was at once struck by the marked change in his manner; he was become so much more serious and reserved. Dick, too, had grown much and had changed much; and this time each boy paired off with one of the girls; Kirk with Maud, and Dick with his favourite sister, Isobel, a girl one year older than himself.

Instinctively no mention of his mother was made to Kirk, but one day in Salisbury, when Maud and Kirk were walking near the station, they met a friend of the Clintons, just arrived from distant parts. He knew Kirk and stopped him, apologised to Miss Nugent, who stood by, and exclaimed—

"Dear me! Kirk! how amazingly you've grown! And how's your father?"

"Quite well, thank you, Mr. Brennan."

"And, Kirk, how's your mother?"

Kirk's mouth and face worked severely, then tears rushed into his eyes and he turned sharply and walked away fast

and went down a quiet street. There he controlled himself, wiped his eyes, and in a few minutes returned ashamedly and met Maud. After a word to Mr. Brennan she had hastily followed Kirk. They did not speak when they met, but went a long walk into the country, and presently Maud took Kirk's arm; she felt very motherly towards him. Himself he felt weak, and ashamed, but much comforted by her.

After this Kirk and Maud became very friendly. Picnics were frequent, the four young people being sent off by Mrs. Nugent nearly every day; and Kirk, so well knowing the countryside, chose the ways, and took them to all his sweetest and most secluded woodland places. He and Maud often sketched together, while Dick obeyed Isobel, whose hobby was botany; and these days were very charming for them all. Maud gradually made Kirk talk of his mother, and these two were never bored, and exchanged ideas for hours on art, music, books, poetry, religion and similar mighty subjects they knew precious little about.

Kirk knew something of scientific botany, but very much more about wild flowers; and with his minute directions, Dick and Isobel made successful side-expeditions to hidden untouched places known to Kirk, and they returned with rare flowers, wild Canterbury bells, a strange brown orchid, sundew in wet clumps of pale golden moss, the spearplume thistle, greater knapweed, golden leopard's bane, wild pansies, yellow loosestrife; also restharrow, and cobalt-blue chicory, both very rare in that countryside.

At last this month came to an end.

In the evening, when Kirk returned to his own home, he suffered heavy depression. The food seemed distasteful, the house cold, gloomy, very sad, and a feeling of extreme irreparable want and loss overcame his heart.

He looked forward very much to seeing the Nugents each Sunday, and talked to them as long as possible after each service, especially to his friend Maud. She was to return

soon, to complete her last year at school. She had told him the whole of her girl's life over there, of how they bathed each summer morning in the Meuse, and all about the frescoes of the great Charlemagne, that hero who so interested her.

One evening before the girls went back to France, Kirk, keeping his intentions to himself, walked over to Salbury and cautiously approached their home. For some inarticulate reason he was too shy to call: he passed near their house, waited about a little and then reapproached. As he neared the house in the dusk he saw Maud and her mother going to their gate. A yearning filled his heart, and he stealthily watched Maud's pretty figure until she entered the house. He walked back to Severnly without knowing what so disturbed himself.

His father closely cross-examined him as to his absence, implying a fault, and Kirk with secret anger at once lied to him very deliberately, purposely and circumstantially, yet carelessly, and without the least feeling of dishonour.

Ministers often dined at the "Gates" on Sundays; they came back from church with the Clintons—a short railway journey of six miles. After early tea they returned to Salbury with the Clintons, and at night went on to Birmingham. In that city was a large mother-church, with the full complement of ministers. The Salbury congregation was small and could not support a full priesthood.

Of these men it can be written, they were clever above the average, and all were sincere, devoted, and convinced of the reality of their work. Among those who visited Severnly were barristers, men who had left vicarages and parsonages, business men and others who had all left their professions and callings, in the same spirit that caused four of the ancient Apostles to abandon their boats and nets. Some members of the Apostolic priesthood were wealthy, and those who were not received stipends sufficient to support themselves and

families. Kirk enjoyed their visits and listened with attention to their conversation. Their views were so much wider and more beautiful than were his father's, but then his father was only a lay-evangelist, he had only been "called," whereas these visitors were duly ordained prophets, evangelists, and pastors, and were full members of the "Fourfold Ministry." Especially was Kirk friendly with Mr. Saintsbury, a pastor. He came down once a month and usually dined with the Clintons. He was an artist before he was a pastor, and he still painted. Kirk thought his face was just like that of Shakespeare, and he had never tired of looking at the small exquisite paintings given to Mrs. Clinton by Saintsbury. All these pictures possessed depth, and a great mysticism. They were but landscapes, but all were very strangely and beautifully chosen. One looked at them a long time, and then again looked at them a long time. Not even the ordinary person said of them, "How pretty!" Most curious of all was, however, to Kirk, the fact that Mr. Saintsbury was a Fellow of the Linnæan Society, for which he had done original research in fungi. Kirk brooded over and respected these diverse abilities. Mr. Saintsbury was a dreamy, warm-hearted man—often lost in his own thought and vision. He took interest in Kirk and replied to many of the questions that rose in the boy's mind, and that were fruit of his secret readings of Richard Jefferies, Jean Paul Richter, and the poets; or that rose from the boy's own original thinking, and his innate thirst to know. The symbology of the church was most satisfying to Kirk, but he sought symbols in everything, and desired to know the analogies between all things spiritual and material.

He was told and believed that the eagle, the bird who soared highest and looked upon the sun, was the symbol of the prophet; the "man" of Revelations was the evangelist, who reasoned as a man with men: the patient ox treading out the corn meant the humble daily duties of the pastor.

Apostleship was shown by the lion, and by gold and purple, the attributes of rulership.

Mr. Saintsbury replied freely to all questions up to a certain point, but recently when Kirk, full of emotional thought and imagination, had asked him, "Then what do trees mean? What *are* trees?" he replied, with some hesitation, "Trees, Kirk, are men. You seek, Kirk, at your age, to know too much of the inner meaning of everything, but there are very many mysteries into which we must not inquire with our finite minds. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' You must accept the fact that the wisdom of God is greater than the wisdom of men. God is a spirit. I warn you, Kirk, particularly, that those who do not accept the word of God—put into the mouth of his priests—such men of a certain temperament become mystics; men living in dreams, in a fool's paradise. It becomes a form of madness if given way to. It is an over-indulgence of the imagination, and goes frequently with another serious error—pride of intellect. You must curb yourself, Kirk; I think this is a danger that you will have to fight against, my dear boy; I think you will have to fight for your faith; I will always be glad to talk with you on these things, and I will ask Mr. Gurney to see you—some special word may be given him to say to you."

Mr. Gurney wore the blue-lined cassock of a prophet. In later years Kirk considered him to be a man possessing a pure and high clairvoyance, but, also, Kirk later considered him to be, like his fellows, living solely in one great specialised thought-form or mind-country—that of the Apostolic Church. Kirk, later in life, decided that most men were born into one of the vast permanent forms of human thought, just as they were born in certain countries and climates. The Roman Catholic religion he regarded as he did an ancient city, one full of antiquity, of tortuous and narrow streets, worn pavements, beauty of old age, majestic decay.

CHAPTER XI

NEARLY two years had passed since Mrs. Clinton's death. Of late, her eldest son had disputed many times with his father, chiefly over want of clothes and money, deliberate non-payment of school fees and bills, and now, since Ted had left school, over continual procrastination in matters of his future career, and especially had there been trouble over offensive restrictions and distrust—such as the harsh order Mr. Clinton gave, that Ted, though aged eighteen, never was to be out-of-doors, under any circumstances whatsoever, after nine-thirty at night. Ted, a great lover and keeper of animals, a natural good shot with a gun, was of an obstinate but open, affectionate, truthful, just, and truly religious nature. Severe friction with his father became frequent, though Ted invariably was respectful.

Kirk had escaped open quarrels with his father. He thought in secret, read in secret books his father would have forbidden or burnt: he disobeyed in secret, and obeyed stoically when it was unavoidable. As regards school fees and expenses he had gone to the Head-master, quietly explained his father's character, and asked the Head to dun his father for the school-fees. If it were done sufficiently, said he, they would be paid; it was not a case of want of money. His father was fairly well-to-do. He mentioned that his father spent much money on foolish, useless things. He was doing all right in his practice. He had lately increased his staff. It was . . . well, a strange eccentricity, a selfishness . . . since mother died.

Doctor Hawke was somewhat shocked. All he had said was: "I'm grieved to hear this, Clinton. I think your father must have greatly felt your mother's death. It often alters a man very much. I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed," and

Kirk had replied philosophically, "It can't be helped, sir. Good morning, sir," and bowed himself out of the study. His advice was taken.

Kirk had soon ceased to ask his father for anything. He began to make a little money for himself in various ways, chiefly by the sale of geological duplicates, and by rearing and training for sale young magpies, jackdaws, hawks, and owls, in which artificial nurture he was an expert. He had also, at the instance of a friendly county councillor, eagerly agreed to name, label, and rearrange two neglected collections of fossils in neighbouring towns, and for this work he received good payment. At the last meeting of the county horticultural society, Kirk also carried off the first prize for a bouquet of wild flowers. This was a very popular contest. Ten prizes in money were each year distributed among the hundred or more competitors. The bouquets were judged upon two chief points—variety or rarity of flowers, and beauty of arrangement. A certificate that gathering and arrangement would be done personally was signed by each rival at the time of entry. Kirk also had received first prize for a named collection of wild flowers. In order that his should be the freshest and the finest he had been out on that day from 2 a.m., gathering the most delicate and fragile of the flowers, and, to accomplish this, he had covered on foot a great distance from point to point.

The feelings of Kirk against his father were a trouble to him. He felt most embittered by the ill-treatment of Ted, whom he loved. Kirk placed his brother far above himself in virtue. Any one who could do ill to his dear old Ted must be bad.

Many, many religious doubts now filled Kirk's mind. He went to church in a state of constant critical examination, most especially of his father. He struggled with thoughts and feelings of unbelief. The old question had come to him, "How could a God of Love, omnipotent, create a world He

knew would be evil? and how could He make His beloved Son die an abominably cruel death, merely to appease an unreasonable anger against the creation He had Himself made?"

And how could Kirk's own father have been chosen by the Holy Spirit as an evangelist? . . . True, he had not been set apart after all. . . . He had not been ordained to the separate priesthood.

Kirk did not ask the ministers any more questions. He thought over all these things in secret, and became very much troubled. He feared to ask, for, should such questions come to his father's ears, it would be a most serious matter—indeed, he thought his father would turn him out of the house.

It weighed heavily on his conscience, to have to go up to Holy Communion in such a state of mind, and with such feelings against his father, feelings of intense brooding anger that he could rarely quench. But beneath his father's rule he was compelled each Sunday to take the Holy Sacrament. At last he could do it no longer; and then a way out of the difficulty occurred to him.

The small flat wafer was used, of unleavened bread. To receive this from the priest, one knelt and crossed the open palms one over the other. The small white square was laid in the upper palm; the communicant bowed the head, took it with the lips and tongue, and by this means the consecrated wafer was not handled by those unordained.

On the Sunday after Kirk had made his resolution he received the deep chalice into his hands as usual, but he raised it carefully so that no wine reached his lips—he then reverently handed the vessel back to the priest. He next received the wafer, took it into his mouth, and retained it there. On reaching his seat and kneeling, he put the wafer out into a clean specially unused handkerchief. At home each Sunday he carefully burnt the wafer. In this way he avoided an impiety, a desecration that had caused him much emotional suffering.

CHAPTER XII

IT was a public holiday, and Mr. Clinton's office at Birmingham was closed. Kirk and Ted had arranged to set off at eight o'clock for a long day's fishing. They had a special permit for this date only, to visit some very good waters. They had been kept waiting and waiting until their father saw fit to have family prayers quite unusually late, instead of before his breakfast, though he knew his sons' arrangements. He had dawdled over the meal, read his paper, and then opened letters, while Ted became depressed, and Kirk fumed with suppressed anger.

At last breakfast had been removed, but it was past ten. The family and servants were standing up and waiting, round a large and rather sombre room, furnished in old dark mahogany. The sideboard, unusually massive, bore some silver and a large collection of ancient Indian brass bowls and figures. The high bookcases were filled mostly with devotional works and with finely bound technical books, rows of "Proceedings of the Institute of Civil Engineers" and other volumes that treated of bridges, steam, mathematics, civil engineering and mining. A dining table occupied the middle of the room. The papered walls were dull grey-blue, covered with a large pattern of flowering white chestnuts. A dark rectangular-patterned dado of olive and brown made the corners obscure, although there were three windows—one very large, reaching nearly from floor to ceiling. A tall full palm stood on the polished floor before the big window. On the walls hung a few choice water-colours, and several small Corots, one genuine Greuze, and one large painting upon canvas—a Dutch interior by a good master. All but the Corots were in heavy gilded frames.

A mantelpiece of grey Devon marble carried for its whole width an immense mirror, of which the gilded framing nearly touched the high ceiling. This mirror at once drew attention. An old Bühl clock stood in the centre of the mantelpiece and on each side was flanked by two large carved mother-of-pearl oysters. At each end stood a tall piece of fine Dresden. This marble shelf would have been beautiful but for the litter of papers, letters, and tradesmen's accounts. These radiated in untidy sheaves from behind the clock and the pearl shells.

Mr. Clinton stood up. He turned over the leaves in the Liturgy. He was still a tall, strongly-built man; spare, not ungraceful, with a marked waist, and he wore excellent creased trousers. He looked his age, some forty-five years. His fine forehead was well-moulded, the temples were somewhat hollow, but the nobly-shaped upper head was smooth and white.

Below this tonsure the hair was jet black, strong and glossy. His dark bushy moustache, well-trimmed, hid the lips. The clean-shaven chin and jaws were heavy. The complexion was clear but slightly swarthy. His Norman nose was long, straight, and high. The eyes were very fine, very dark, but very severe, exceedingly cold and melancholy. Between and above the bushy eyebrows lay a deep vertical line in the forehead. Mr. Clinton stood up firmly and spoke—

"The Lord be with you."

"And with thy spirit."

The reply was murmured in a very lifeless manner, the accent being placed on the first word. The speaker paused. His dark eyes, fine and steady, shot an angry glance; his shaggy eyebrows worked as he repeated in a peremptory manner—

"The Lord be with you!" . . .

Lowering the book in his hands, he said sternly to his second son—

"Why do you not answer, sir?"

The tall youth leaned slightly against the sideboard, his hands behind him; he moved his eyes, but not his head. He returned his father's glance with a look of still anger. His insolent reply was given in a low, hard voice—

“Because I do not *want* the Lord to be with you.”

Kirk had his father's fanatical eyes; but they were dark grey, and at this moment were like the glint of hot polished steel.

“How dare you insult God in this way!” exclaimed the father, red vertical cords rising on his forehead.

“God is not here; I am sure.”

The speaker of these words now stood up squarely, motionless, his still eyes fixed upon his father's. His brother and sister looked shocked. The two servants and the houseboy near the dining-room scented eagerly at the unusual.

The son's face was long, he had a high forehead, full temples, and the nose high, long, straight, with finely cut nostrils. His upper lip was short, the mouth small and firm; the chin sharp, but determined, and improved by a slight cleft or dimple. There was bone and a clean-cut look about the face and cheek-bones. Except for the knotted fingers, the pose, the eyes, he in no other way markedly resembled his father, who now made an inarticulate noise, violent jerkish movements with the book, and then with ungovernable anger forced out the command—

“ . . . Go, to your room.”

Kirk hesitated, then went out quietly and closed the door. Outside, on the black sheepskin rug, he stood a moment staring absently at an old steel breastplate that hung on the wall. There was a sullen hatred in his keen face. Then he went forward, treading softly over the black-and-white marble; he slung his fishing basket about his shoulder, gripped his rod gun-like beneath his arm, opened and shut the front door quietly, and set off at a furious walking pace, through the hot August morning. As he went, he theorised bitterly and truly that Ted would be forbidden to follow him.

CHAPTER XIII

KIRK'S religious instinct was soon to receive a ruder blow.

Six miles from Severnly, and long forgotten in thick woodlands, was a deep and curious ravine. It had been made before the time of railways, and when tunnelling was but little known.

A very old abandoned canal, after wandering for miles along sloping fields that grew lonelier, and through woods that grew denser, came into a region of great larch coverts. In the middle of this forest the old waterway entered a ravine. This narrow defile—its sides well-nigh vertical—became of great depth and was very deeply shadowed, as the sloping forest-land rose higher and higher. The gorge ceased abruptly far above a ruinous tunnel, the mouth of which was much obscured by accumulated hanging bramble-bushes. Some way inside the tunnel the arched masonry had long since fallen in. From the cliff-like sides of the gorge peeped out almost from top to bottom innumerable thin level ledges of rock, many-coloured. Everywhere these rugged shelves were grown luxuriantly with bushes, plants, wild flowers of all kinds, brambles, creepers and ivy. The dense pines and larches stood solemnly all round, and all along the edges of the gulf, and overhung this very deep and silent place. Far below lay clear and cold still water, that reflected the dark trees and the depth of open narrow zenith from far above. Such transparent water, deep, heavily shadowed, and moveless, always held Kirk with a sense of mysterious waiting. It was like something else that lay deep in himself, and waited, and watched himself fixedly. This motionless and perfect reflection seemed to double the

great depth of the ravine. Often when Kirk, standing on the verge in the forest, gazed down into the reflection and let himself enter the unreal, he saw only an extraordinary narrow chasm, that went down and opened in another zenith, most profoundly below his feet.

In summer, many bright shafts of slender sunbeams shot down through the dense forest, and were arrested by the long thin edges of the rocks, by bold outgrowing bushes, by the top bells of crimson foxgloves that overleaned; but few spears of golden light ever reached the water, and beneath all the projecting ledges lay dark shadows.

After finding this place, Kirk went there often. From the silent carpet of the resinous scented forest he would climb cautiously down to a ledge, creep gradually along it to some point where it had broken away, and then he would climb down to the next shelf of rock. In this manner—not without risk of life—he frequently descended halfway down the perilous vertical side of the gorge. Then he would sit and think, and hear, far overhead, the tits calling and flitting in the larch-tops, or the wild harsh cries of jays, or the sound of the air flowing through the countless tree-tops, so inimitably like the sound of ocean. Under the ledges on still and hot days the air was always cool, the shade grateful to the body; and the silence and separation were beatific to his soul.

The ravine was geologically of exceptional interest, for it gave view of certain curious rocks and marls, that nowhere else could be seen as here.

A single deep indentation broke the rocky face on one side of the ravine, and near its head. This rift, or side-chasm, descended from the forest roots to a point about sixty feet above the water; it had been made long ago, to reach and work a thick horizontal bed of pink sandstone. Looking down into it from above, one theorised that it must have been cut down vertically out of the gorge-side. From the edge of the forest, on the opposite brink, this place had no ordinary

appearance. For the innumerable banded strata, one below the other, thin and horizontal, formed wonderfully and highly coloured narrow zones, of real pink, real warm crimson, or vivid yellow, alternating with beautiful bands of pale green, tea-green, and terra-cotta browns and reds—from top to bottom. The once level floor at the foot of this three-sided rift was now almost wholly encroached upon and covered by old grass-grown falls of rock and marl, and by slopes of fine talus that had yearly crumbled from the soaring coloured walls. Thick tussocky rushes grew in the centre, and a filtering of limpid water stole out of them, winter and summer, dripped its way down from edge to edge, and made a bright festoon of sparkling vegetation right down almost to the sullen water. This peculiar side-chasm in the gorge side, so interesting to Kirk, was very difficult of access. He thought the men must have used ladders lashed together, or perhaps a rope ladder, for descent, and that the stone—if that were what was sought—must have been lowered by windlass on to barges. But no remnants of such work remained. The harebells and mosses and the rushes grew everywhere, untouched, where men, now long dead, had once worked day by day. Kirk made several attempts before he found a way into this old recess. He succeeded by climbing down the gorge-side, ledge by ledge, until he judged himself to be level with the bottom of the rift. He then traversed cautiously along the rock-ledge he had reached, until it ended at the rift. After some hesitation, he made a most risky scramble round the corner, and found himself at the bottom of the rift. He looked out at a narrow vertical perspective of the gorge-side opposite. Behind him, and on his left and right, rose the coloured walls of banded rock and marl.

Presently he set to work and cut a narrow pathway round the corner, on to the ledge that gave him access.

One July day, geological hammer and chisel in hand, while Kirk was examining in this peculiar place the fallen frag-

ments of rock and marl, he split a small slab of greenish sandstone. A great thrill held him from breathing as he gazed, for across the ripple-marked slab were deeply traced the footprints of a little four-footed archaic animal. Kirk knew this to be a find rare and wonderful. He knew well, too, that these footprints had been made when the spot he stood on was a boundless shore, among subsiding desert seas, almost dead seas, that were too hot, too arid, too salt to support any life but that of stunted fish and shell-fish. Holding the slab and gazing on it, he felt the keen sympathy of a living creature—himself—with this lonely animal that was so profoundly lost and for ever passed away. The warm light on his hands reminded him that the great Sun still poured down his divine rays. Behold! this same light he stood in was but another of the countless, countless “afternoons”—part of this vast and ceaseless flow of sunlight that went back and back until that little animal had lived, and then infinitely further and further still before even those times. And Kirk vividly imagined himself, realised himself, standing—ages and ages ago, long, long before the human race—listening to the lapping of the hot wavelets that once had rippled the sand, while he stood, the only human being in the world, and looked over the boundless desert, and the equally unknown burning sea. His gaze rested again on the hardened ripple-marks, the footprints, and the indistinct trails of shell-fish. The last eyes that saw them wet and soft had not been human, and had seen things millions of years ago!

After that vast lapse, his own eyes were destined first to re-see these footsteps.

Kirk now theorised that as the labyrinthodonts—these small amphibious creatures—had without doubt walked about on these strata, when such were soft sea deposits, then it followed that the *fossils* of their food, *i.e.* of *fish*, should be discoverable in these same strata. Also, from the trails of shell-fish, one would deduce the presence of their fossilised shells.

But he knew that these rocks were said in text-books to be barren in England, of all ancient life-remains. Yet, despite this, he determined eagerly to search and examine, to test his theory.

Late on the next Saturday afternoon, after a hot climb down to the rift, Kirk was resting and gazing absently over the chasm, when he espied on the opposite cliff a small and rare flowering shrub. He stood up at once and looked again; yes, there was no doubt; it was the very flower of which Isobel had told him. She specially wanted this plant for her collection. She had read to him the description of its haunts, and had shown him a coloured sketch of the flower—and now, unexpectedly, he had found the prize! He would give it to her to-morrow—when he saw her. He thought also how pleased Maud would be.

But as Kirk looked and reconnoitred the shrub seemed more and more difficult to obtain. It was about opposite to himself, viz., some fifty feet above the water and eighty feet or so below the floor of the forest. Had he but had a long rope, all would have been easy; but the bloom was going—he could see the pale pink petals on the grey sandstone just below the plant. Tentatively he picked out, on the opposite face, a line of descent from ledge to ledge. This seemed a possible way down with the help of the stout wind-or-bird-sown saplings and bushes. High overhead he marked the commencement of this line by a group of red foxgloves that leaned over the very edge. He then made his way upwards from the rift and at length walked round the head of the ravine.

He found the foxgloves. He took off his coat and made a very careful descent of some thirty feet; but he had to return. The ledges were soft here, and pieces broke off; the bushes also were not well-rooted, and he heard dislodged stones fall and plunge heavily in the water. Difficultly he climbed up again. He chose another place, judging himself almost above the coveted flower, and again he began to climb down—

wards. It was not easy. When he had slowly descended some way he discovered another climber—a rabbit, crouched on the last bit at the end of a little ledge. For some seconds each remained motionless. But the moment that Kirk moved, the terrified rabbit tried to scramble away but instantly lost footing. It fell eighty feet. Kirk heard distantly the impact of the body when it struck the water. This happening somewhat unnerved him; also he felt very pitiful to the poor wild animal sent to death out of its happy life. Remaining still and peering down through the dense growth of the ledges he saw half the circles that widened out on the sinister water. With increased care, nevertheless, he began to continue his descent, but suddenly a big mass of rock and marl gave way beneath his feet, and for two seconds he hung only by his hands. The tremendous plunge of the débris echoed throughout the ravine. A jay fled away crying; loud clappings of wild pigeons arose overhead in the forest.

With arms trembling, Kirk gradually climbed up again to safety. He thought a little, and then determined to see if he could get up from the bottom. He walked along the ravine for some five hundred yards, until he could get down to the wateredge. The talus of years made a narrow, highly sloping and broken path, right along beneath the cliff; indeed it seemed that some kind of a base-ledge had been left here. Kirk crept along this, at the cliff-foot, until opposite the rabbit—there it floated, the white fur partly upward, terror fixed in the dead open eyes. From far inside the black tunnel was now audible a chilling sound of falling water. The day was closing, and the first gloom of coming night began to fill the lowest of this deep void in the forest. Kirk threw off a strange feeling of awe, and began to climb upward. It was getting late. "How quickly the time has passed!" thought he. It seemed much easier to climb up. He became less careful. When twenty feet up he seized too vigorously a little sapling; it gave completely; he fell, struck

the sandy cliff-foot, and bounced partly into the frigid water.

After this he sat still for ten minutes, until the feeling of nausea had passed away, and until his wet limbs had ceased trembling. "This is nothing!" thought he. "One always trembles after boxing—after any great exertion." Presently—and within him a kind of fierce anger—he began once more to climb, but this time with the greatest circumspection. Slowly he went up, or sideways, and a shower of small stones fell now and then. And at length he reached the level of the shrub. Eagerly he examined it. He took it bodily from its slight hold, held the stem between his teeth, and then climbed on for the cliff top. The sun was quite low when Kirk came out near the foxgloves. He felt a strong and gratifying sense of triumph, but his eyes avoided the ravine, for in this darkness it was, minute by minute, becoming a terrifying abyss. He hastened from the ravine and the forest before he examined himself. His clothes seemed none the worse—they were only wet. He had merely got severe bruises upon his hip and shoulder, and a rather bad cut on the back of his hand.

Kirk never again stayed till darkness came; but in sunshine the seclusion of the ravine fascinated him. There no one had ever come. No one ever disturbed the place or himself. He could dream in summer and at the same time could work away at the thin hard strata. He had vainly explored here and there in many places, and had become discouraged from his search, when one day he read in Cuvier these words: "That place most examined yields most." Fired anew by this saying, by the attractive look of the strata, and by the instinct of discovery, Kirk determined to begin at the very top and work right down systematically to the very bottom. He would open as it were the pages of each rocky manuscript and peep in; he would go down layer by layer and examine the accumulated, dried, and hardened sands and silts of the vanished sea—from top to bottom! He now

brought out with him a four-pound hammer and a long chisel. A fortnight seldom passed in which Kirk did not spend a day or two in the ravine. At the end of each day he buried the hammer and chisel to await his return. The nearest station was three miles away, but he preferred to walk. It saved fivepence, and country lanes were a sweetness to him. He had by now given most of his affection to lanes and woods and fields and trees he loved, and especially to wild flowers and their own haunts; and for his private use he had long named such places. Among them were Shady Lane, Hazel Lane, Lingering Path, West Woodloes, Nettle-bed Wood, Violets' Wood, "Ringdoves" (a dark pine wood), Reedy Pool, The Carp Pools, The Rock, Shadow Bushes; and there was a brook that was the very sister of Tennyson's Brook, and since Kirk was thirteen he had called it "On-On."

One September afternoon, over three years since his mother's death, Kirk again was in the ravine. His coat lay on the dry dying grass of a broad ledge, his hammer and chisel clinked away musically in the silence. He had now worked more than halfway down, with no success from the day of the footprints. He paused to rest, and then heard a slight unusual sound that made him sharply look up. A short and sturdy old clergyman stood and gazed down at him from the opposite brink. He beckoned with a gloved hand that held a hammer.

Great vexation filled Kirk—intensely jealous of his solitude. He was quite unaware that the Reverend James Blenk, M.A., F.R.S., F.G.I., felt just the same. Kirk climbed up to the old man, who introduced himself and made a very full cross-examination of Kirk. Immediately Kirk found the intruder was indeed the great Blenk, the Medallist, one of those great ones of the Geological Institute, then his feelings were changed utterly, to something like worship. The patronage of Mr. Blenk was quite proper; he had a right to ask everything about one's parentage and age. Mr. Blenk

now gave Kirk some interesting details about the rocks at which they looked; he then spoke of himself. He was the rector of Priors Lench, a hamlet some few miles distant. For over forty years he had kept this old quarry under observation, whenever it had been worked—"only twice; once to mend our tithe-barn, and once, twenty-five years ago, to restore a few pinnacles on Severnly Abbey Lady Chapel—the original quarry is buried somewhere in this forest." He catechised Kirk as to his reading in geology, and put him through quite an examination.

"What! and have you devoured Giekie's great text-book? Well done! well done indeed!"

Kirk glowed with pleasure, and forthwith poured out to Mr. Blenk all about the system and the search he had now been engaged on for three months—and he quoted his Frenchman. . . . But the old man laughed dryly—

"Ah, I fear you will get nothing! in fact I know you will find nothing. Very praiseworthy of you—but barren! all barren! like fishing in the Dead Sea!" Then he told Kirk how a few tiny fossil fragments of some unknown animal had been found here by the quarrymen thirty-five years ago, in the big bed of pink sandstone, and he spoke on. "Nothing since then! That bed is the only hope—there *is* something in that." And he looked down at Kirk's tools. "But what can you do with those?"

The place had a memory unpleasant for Mr. Blenk, for his wife was rich, and after her husband by great trouble at last obtained leave to quarry that big bed, ten years ago, she had refused flatly to finance his operations, and at last, being importuned, she had used such words—

"My dear! quite absurd! spending money for the possible sake of rubbishy bits of fossil-rubbish! absolutely absurd! my *dear!*"—and she remained adamant. Blenk had never forgotten this humiliation.

Kirk, a few weeks after meeting him, went by invitation

to the Rectory. Amid his quite exceptional collection Mr. Blenk thawed; he became enthusiastic, and talked freely while Kirk, sincerely respectful, looked, listened, and learned.

From the very first he liked Mrs. Blenk. She was a tall, big, fat, sensible, rosy, beautifully dressed old lady. She had excellent ideas upon the feeding capacity of young folk. She was serene and satisfied with life. She had always ruled kindly and firmly in the Rectory and in the isolated old-world hamlet. The interests of her husband, who unfortunately had become so avaricious in his collecting, so childishly greedy and jealous of scientific fame, were to her entirely trivial, and mere harmless eccentricities. Nevertheless, the city of Severnly owed him a great debt for a very fine geological museum, which had long attracted *savants* from London, France, and Germany. Case after case of treasures had been obtained or given through the influence of Mr. Blenk. Everywhere in the museum his name appeared on specimens. Kirk was aware of all this long before Mr. Blenk found him in the ravine. The boy had spent many, many hours among those cases, and at the suggestion of Mr. Stogg, who was the enormously tall, thin, kindly, eccentric, and grossly ignorant curator—Kirk had even hoped there to meet Mr. Blenk. But the old scientist now rarely came to Severnly, and Kirk each time had missed him. This visit to the Rectory was for Kirk an affair of great importance. Actually to know and visit the Rev. James Blenk, F.R.S., etc., was indeed a getting on in life. It was a great event!

Moved more than usual by the uncommon mind and keen interest of Kirk, Mr. Blenk overcame the miserliness that cursed his old age, and gave him a few choice duplicates. After much tea and cake, Mrs. Blenk ordered the carriage, and Kirk, very, very happy, was driven to the station. He took a second-class ticket, being too foolishly sensitive, vain, and elated to allow the smart groom to put his parcel of fossils into a third-class carriage. Of all these matters he never told one word to his father, fearing deprecation, oppo-

sition, or interference; but he told Mary everything, and took her several times to the ravine, paying her fare both ways to the rather distant station.

He continued his research in the gorge, and received a letter now and then from Mr. Blenk—letters never written on notepaper, but on the backs of advertisements, on the blank backs of railway excursion fly-bills, even on pieces of brown paper; but the envelopes, addressed in a minute spidery hand, bore a handsome black crest. Mr. Blenk seemed to acquire railway handbills *en masse*. He had told Kirk they made excellent paper to enwrap fossils for transit. On the arrival of the second letter Kirk's father cross-examined him as to the origin. The fact of Mr. Blenk being a rector just sufficiently allayed that dark suspicion with which Mr. Clinton now habitually regarded natural science, and all letters received by his son. He took the opportunity to hope Kirk would conduct himself as a gentleman, and remarked that Mr. Blenk was very good "to take such interest in a youth."

While his father was away Kirk spent a whole Sunday at Priors Lench. By request of Mrs. Blenk he arrived there on Saturday in time for lunch. He became quite enamoured of Mrs. Blenk. He divided his attention with considerable tact between the motherly and the scientific. In the old church, full of rich glass and carvings, Kirk sat before the pulpit and beside his hostess during the Sunday morning service. Pennons of long railway handbills gummed together descended slowly, and went up briskly, in front of the pulpit-lectern, as Mr. Blenk read quickly through his sermon. Kirk, quietly observing, judged the longest single effort to be no less than six feet. After dinner Kirk and Mr. Blenk went a walk, and, instinctively, made their way towards the ravine, which lay some two miles distant.

"I do not geologise on Sundays, Mr. Clinton, but there will be no harm in our glancing round—as you say you have nearly reached the end of your search?"

"Yes, I have examined each horizon right down as far as it is possible; there's not much left to be done!"

"A useless waste of energy, Clinton . . . perfectly useless."

"It *looks* so good."

"Ha! ha! ha! . . . *I'm afraid you are a romantic . . . ?*"

Mr. Blenk, as he said this, looked closely at Kirk as though he were a most doubtful fossil.

". . . But you must put that kind of thing quite, *quite* away!"

CHAPTER XIV

TED had spent a year in his father's office, and he certainly earned his living, though he drew no salary. Ted learnt to survey, trace, draw, and colour. He worked hard and showed skill in calculations. He acquired a practical knowledge of brickwork, masonry, concrete, earthwork, tunnelling and bridgework, and he gained some practice in minor civil engineering design. Ted would have made a very good civil engineer, but from his father he received no encouragement. Ted's very proper desire to take the necessary engineering course at Owen's, or Mason's, or King's College was pooh-poohed; and, after some final months of sharper friction with his father, Ted suddenly left home. He had now held a very poor appointment for a twelvemonth; but by great economy he had managed, not only to keep himself, but also to pay tithe, one-tenth of his income, to the Church. Mr. Clinton now seldom thought of his elder son. If he spoke of him, it was always with opprobrium or disparagement, and correspondence between father and son had ceased quickly. Kirk was by now seventeen and was to leave Severnly School at the end of the term; but beyond this his father had said nothing of his future. Kirk had grown up into a fairly tall, rather slim, and very hardy youth. He carried himself well. He was not without good looks, and, further, he was clever-looking. His silky dark-brown hair reflected a reddish glint, and curled a little here and there. The perceptive faculties just above the brows were full, and, had this not been so, the high upper forehead might have been too prominent. His temples were full; indeed, they were already the marked temples of the idealist, of the lover of things

great, majestic, strange, and beautiful. But the grey eyes, level and well apart, marked most the expression of this face. Habitually now was mingled in them both a keenness and a state of reverie. In opposition these eyes were bold and steady, quite matter-of-fact, cold, even supercilious. Truthful people they met truthfully. When their owner sensed deception, the deceitful felt these eyes become utterly piercing, most disconcerting, and such people were compelled to speak on, but could not meet these eyes. In general, accentuated by the acuteness of the lines, his face carried a look of one searching. Although grave in repose, Kirk's face lit up vivaciously, his eyes changed and sparkled when interest or pleasure, but especially when emotion touched him.

About mid-term, upon a Wednesday afternoon, Kirk by previous arrangement met his reverend geological friend at Severnly museum. Mr. and Mrs. Blenk had to-day come in by train. The Yorkshire coachman—the only person ever known flatly to contradict or oppose Mrs. Blenk—had very positively informed her that morning, “Nor, nor M'm, aw konnor let thee tak th' horse out o' sterbel, not t'der. Yon Bess has geeten a fair mish corld. Thee can tak' lettell toob to stertion, wi' porny.”

There was shopping to be done, but first Mrs. Blenk thought that for once in her life she would look round this everlasting museum, of which she had so often heard. As they all entered she was speaking with Kirk, and panted a little: the stairs were rather steep for one so tall and stout.

“Only fancy, Mr. Clinton! I have never been here before; so *far*, you know, so *much* to do! When one comes to town, oh! . . . these stairs . . . you must show me, the . . . the *things*.”

But Mr. Stogg, amateur artist of portentous works, “curator” by some strange machination of the Fates, possessor of a gigantic strawberry nose and a most surprising lisp, now authoritatively waved Kirk and Mr. Blenk forward by them-

selves, and at once took in hand Mrs. Blenk. For her husband Mr. Stogg had long entertained a prodigious pitying contempt. But for all women he had ever felt he possessed a peculiar charm. For his own learning he had that deep respect he gave to no one else. Meanwhile, he adroitly turned Mrs. Blenk into one room, and then deigned to greet Mr. Blenk.

"G'dafternoon, Mishter Bellenk," said he, to Mr. Blenk's back, adding with a subdued disappointment, "Ar thought ye was dead!"

"Dead! dead! dead!! What do you mean? Bring the keys of No. 1 to 8 quickly; dead indeed! dead!"

"A dreadful creature, Clinton, that, but we have no funds for a better: dead indeed! dead . . ." murmured Blenk, quite upset by the idea.

Presently Kirk and Mr. Blenk, while opening cases near the doorway of another room, overheard the conversation of Mrs. Blenk and her mentor, and Kirk saw them standing in front of a huge fossil saurian—an extinct sea lizard—partly embedded in the heavy limestone slabs in which it had been found. Stogg, highly exhilarated by a recent large nip of gin, was equal to any question, even from the most learned, and he discoursed ably and imperiously. But he had not yet absolutely dominated Mrs. Blenk.

"Yes, Mr. Stogg, yes, yes, yes," said Mrs. Blenk, forcing her way into his turgid flow of description, "but *how* did it get there?"

"Lor blesh ye! 'Ee come-out-on-the-beach! Shee? Shee? Shee?"

"Yes?" (doubtfully).

"Then come the coal measures! and cover j'im in!!"

Mr. Stogg delivered this with triumphant unction, and struck an attitude.

"Really! *really*, Mr. Stogg! how *intensely* interesting . . . I never even *thought* of such a thing!! . . . and this,

Mr. Stogg, is, I suppose, his top jaw?" She poked it with her umbrella. Stogg fiercely caught the umbrella-end. "Don't spile 'im! Don't spile 'im!!"—He glared at her, then reluctantly loosed the umbrella, said, "Mushn't *poke* 'im!"—and so returned to his grander manner, with reproof added thereto—

"That, mam, is 'is soopeerior man-geable." And Mrs. Blenk took the reproof with secret delight as she passed to the next exhibit. . . .

"What a strange flat fish! and what very thick scales!" said she.

"Hosteo-leppish! grand!! grand spheshemen!! a hancient plaice, mum! note grand blennemite by 'is nose!"

"But the *fish*, my dear Mr. Stogg, *why* is it so very, *very* flat?"

Stogg really was posed for a moment, only for a moment, the while he murmured "Stogg, Madam, Stogg"—then, smiling awfully—he leered at Mrs. Blenk as he drew back dramatically, and lowered his face to hers—he glanced pointedly over her ample form—his great nose went purple with joy—and he exclaimed witheringly—

"You'd 'a been flat! if you'd 'a been were 'ee was!!!"

Kirk was shaking with suppressed delight, and even Mr. Blenk heard Stogg and said—

"Great heavens! what things that fellow is telling that woman!"

Kirk and his companion opened many cases, and took out fossils to examine them in the best light, but Mrs. Blenk had soon gone shopping, and was to meet her husband on the five-o'clock train. Stogg nominally closed the museum at 4.30 p.m., but 4 o'clock better suited him, and as this earlier time had now arrived he hovered most impatiently behind the rector's coat-tails, he shut the cases up after him in great heat, and grumbled audibly to himself. But Mr. Blenk took no notice and went on talking with Kirk. Stogg looked with

deep contempt at his president, then went to a window, leaned out, jerked in again, and exclaimed into the room—

“Fivesh o’clock! I know you’ll be late! and I ’opesh ye will!” Up jumped Mr. Blenk banging a glass door in his haste to whip out his watch.

“Five o’clock, man!! Goodness, how you frightened me!”

“All right! all right! don’t she believe me! . . . An’ ye’ve put your backside nearly through that cashe! I *know* ye’ll be late and I ’opesh ye will!” and Stogg went off deliberately to an inn which stood opposite the museum.

Kirk, a week later, walked out to the ravine. He climbed down within fifteen feet of water-level. He made his way along for some distance, and then began to complete his long examination. But he did not remain there more than twenty minutes. His chisel and hammer, suddenly thrown down, lay on the narrow talus at the bottom of the ravine. Almost breathless through a rapid climb, through speed and excitement, he ran through the forest on a bee-line for the rectory. In his hand he carried a small pink slab. On this were two fossil mollusca—fossil shell-fish. Kirk knew well the records of these barren rocks. The shells in his hand were *not* recorded, and were of two species. He was positive he had found new species.

“Good heavens! It’s incredible! utterly incredible luck!” panted he aloud, as he ran, breathless, exulting with the great joy of discovery.

Mr. Blenk confirmed absolutely Kirk’s surmise. They were without any shadow of doubt two unknown species, and, extraordinary occurrence! both on one tiny slab! Blenk was even more astonished, when Kirk showed him some other fossils found that same day in the ravine, not unknown in Germany, but of extreme rarity in Great Britain. Blenk hid his profound chagrin, his intense malicious jealousy. To him it was as though another miser had come at night and taken away hidden gold from his own garden, from under his

nose: precious delicious gold, gold! that wretchedly had lain within his reach all those forty years! This miserable, inquisitive, ferreting youth had no right to such a discovery. It was rank poaching, and of what possible use was such a discovery to a mere boy?

But Mrs. Blenk made Kirk sit by the fire, and insisted on tea before the two departed in the carriage to visit the ravine. Before they set off, she made Kirk wrap a rug round himself, to prevent chill after his three-mile race. When they arrived, the climb down was found quite impossible for Mr. Blenk, so he stood in the darkening forest, and watched Kirk's unconsciously perilous descent. Kirk at length signalled the place of discovery to Mr. Blenk, shouted a description to him, and then climbed back.

Kirk was to measure up and make a most complete section of the strata, and was to write a paper. Mr. Blenk said that he would himself personally read it at the Geological Institute, on behalf of Kirk. He would help him in every way, correct the manuscript, and place his library at Kirk's disposal. Kirk was deeply grateful, and happy as a girl newly betrothed to one she loves.

The new species and the very rare fish-fossils were sent up to London for examination. Several scientific journals published preliminary notes and mentioned Kirk's name. The editor of a London paper sent a man to interview Kirk. The Severnly and local press followed suit. These people all asked for and received full, exact information. And each, without consulting Kirk, or any ordinary geologist, cut down the copy, and printed a kindly and imposing notice; which was indeed full—for the scientific—of amusing, annoying, or astounding misconceptions, misspellings, and omissions. These printings filled Kirk with a mingled gratitude and confused vexation. The specimens were returned from London. They would go up again with Mr. Blenk. Kirk said nothing to his father, but other people did, and Mr. Clinton was annoyed to find himself in the dark. He turned up the local

papers for the last few days, glanced through them and then sent for Kirk.

"What are these things you have been finding? Let me look at them."

Kirk brought the treasures. "Please handle them with great care, father, they are very fragile." He was on pins while his father looked carelessly at several specimens.

"Dear me! bits of stone! bits of old shells! Is all this fuss merely about these things, Kirkpatrick? . . . You are spending too much time, far too much time, on this kind of thing. . . . I am indeed surprised that a clergyman should occupy himself with such trifles."

Three months later, Kirk, with highly pleasurable anticipation, opened the first copy he had ever possessed of the Geological Institute Journal. Mr. Blenk had sent it without a note—Kirk knew the book contained his own paper. He found the place, glanced, and went pale. Most piercing grief seized him for a moment. Then a tumult of great anger and resentment, utter exasperation, humiliation, and a ferocious will to revenge, raged in him.

The discovery was recorded, the paper printed, in the name of the Rev. James Blenk, F.R.S., etc. There was no mention whatever of Kirk. He sat down and wrote a short letter to Blenk. He informed him that he was "a liar, a blackguard, a cad, a thief, and a typical minister of God." He finished it, "Yours detestingly." He then wrote several long letters to London, and in each gave an exact and full account of all that had been done.

To prevent scandal, the authorities after some delay wrote Kirk very sympathetically and pointed out the age and grey hairs of Mr. Blenk, and promised to set things right in some way; and, later on, at the meeting of the British Scientific Association of that year, the *novo species* were publicly named, one of them after Kirk. But his hero-worship of scientists had for the time utterly departed. He went once

more to the ravine. He carefully dug away or hid all traces of the place of his discovery, and he spent a long time in re-planting the disturbed and cleared ledges with moss, grass, and seedlings. With thorns he filled up the little paths and apertures he had cut, and he closed up the way to the place of the shells—a short way that he had cut upwards from below, and up which he had helped Mr. Blenk with great difficulty. In this ledge-path he now balanced some great stones, in the evil hope that one might tip over and throw his enemy into the chasm and the water, should he attempt to revisit the spot. Alas! that lonely, strange, and beautiful place was all spoilt for Kirk. Never again would he wish to go to the ravine.

This affair led to Kirk's third and last quarrel with his father. Blenk wrote a copious letter to the son, complaining of the shocking language he had used, and arguing that it did not matter in whose name the discovery was set down, and that he had told every one that Kirk had *participated* in it—in fact, had been perhaps the chief actor in the matter, which was, however, only of trifling import in any case, and certainly did not from any point of view merit the use of the disgraceful language Mr. Clinton had seen fit to address to an aged clergyman; to one who had helped him—one who had felt an interest in him, invited him into his house, and even made him gifts. He was very grieved to receive such ingratitude from a young man.

This letter Kirk found prominently placed on the dining-room table; and as he took it, he thought his father looked strangely at him.

Two days later, at lunch, Kirk asked his father—

"Mary and myself are asked to the Moresbys' private theatricals on Thursday; may we be out till eleven, father?"

"No, sir! you may not." . . . Mr. Clinton was preparing to carve, and stood up. He held the knife and steel in his hands.

“ . . . Why not, father ? ”

“ Because you have disgraced yourself. You have written an insulting letter to an aged clergyman. ”

Kirk stood up opposite his father, leaned forward, fixed his eyes upon his father's, and spoke slowly.

“ How dare you open my letter ? . . . I now think the same of you both. ”

Mr. Clinton's face changed, he looked down, the position was very awkward.

“ You . . . you viper ! ” said he. He struck his son's hand with the steel ; but his son did not move, and the blood ran on the table-cloth. Mr. Clinton unexpectedly flung the steel down and left the room.

“ Oh, Kirk ! this is so horrible, ” said Mary reproachfully, pale and greatly distressed.

“ He's a cad, and he knows he's been a cad, and we'll have lunch now, dear, ” said Kirk, trembling with passion. He tied a handkerchief round his hand, carved, and attempted to eat.

After this unhappy event Kirk and his father did not speak to each other, unless it were unavoidable. But the son continued to obey his father's house-rules, with a few exceptions.

Kirk now was reading in secret the works of Darwin, Drummond, Wallace, and the geologists ; but his thoughts turned more and more to the beauty, mystery, wonder, and sadness of nature, apart from apes or men. He began to view all religion in a different light ; he began to despise and dismiss it. Mankind as a whole took on a sordid aspect, and nature seemed ever the more beautiful and beloved. He lived in dreams, poetry, strange beliefs and thoughts, unusual surmise, feelings of superiority of soul and mind, solitary ecstasies—and he read more and more extensively in Landor, Macaulay, Emerson, Froude, Carlyle, George Eliot, Paul Jean Richter, and Franz Hartmann. But above all these he read, re-read, pondered on, and loved Richard Jefferies,

the one and sole apostle of earth-life outside the human race; perhaps the only man of genius who ever consciously incarnated his soul in all those beautiful living things not human; for Richard Jefferies both saw and left the "pageant of summer," as might sense and live in it a wild flower, or a nightingale.

CHAPTER XV

MR. CLINTON articulated his second son as a pupil to himself, the term being for three years. Kirk had made no objection. There had been no alternative. Inheriting from his father and his grandfather, he took easily to civil engineering. He learned quickly to use with skill and accuracy the level and theodolite. Drawings of the most complex nature he soon made, or read with facility. But design, creation of things, alone held any real interest for him. The early glamour of the profession soon passed away, and he viewed his work solely as a means of livelihood. In design only did he obtain pleasure, and in design he was, like his father, markedly inventive, fertile, resourceful, and rapid. His pupilship was now nearly finished. Life with his father, both in office and at home, was become very irksome, most limiting. For nearly three years these two had travelled together daily between Severnly and the office. Clinton used the first class, and provided Kirk with third-class travel. The reserve between father and son had not been broken. There was scarcely a subject apart from business on which they could converse. Kirk chafed and suffered more and more under the severe material, financial, mental, and spiritual restraints forced on him by the strong will and peculiar views of his father. He was now determined to leave home at the first opportunity, and forever free himself from his father.

To this end he now made effort after effort. He wrote many letters, and applied for every appointment he thought he could undertake. But he was not successful. Good posts are always obtained by influence.

His father still had valuable influence in Victoria Street, but would not exert himself even a little to use it on Kirk's behalf. It was too much trouble to take: his son should not go "to that hot-bed of vice, London;" he would get him something himself, when the boy knew more. For in Clinton's eyes Kirk was still only a boy.

Then there was the true motive—Mr. Clinton had during the past two years found Kirk more and more useful in his own office. He thought he could ill dispense with him just now; really, it would be very annoying. It was best for his son to live at home for the present. The peculiar parsimony of Clinton was now becoming strongly rooted. He did not like parting with money—especially to son or daughter. He had no conception of their wants or of their feelings. He had never pictured himself in some one else's place or circumstance. He had no imagination in matters emotional or spiritual. Only in civil engineering problems did he use imagination. This lack was his great defect in life, for it shut him out from understanding others. It made him both act and seem very much more selfish than in truth he was. The loss of Agnes, his wife, had for him been a cruel calamity. The bereavement had been for him the setting-in of winter, the end of interest in all present human life. In nothing did he take real pleasure. Moths had destroyed the covers of his fine fly rods; and he lived wholly reserved and self-absorbed, either in theological abstractions, or in his civil engineering and matters of routine. Of late years Clinton had but once or twice deviated from the narrow road of life he followed. On the last occasion he had been shown, and had closely examined, a small cinematograph, at that time a new invention. This was at the house of an American, a very wealthy member of the Church, who recently had married and settled in England. Mr. Clinton woke up as it were at dinner one night and described the apparatus to Mary and Kirk. Novel things of that kind had attracted him in his young days. Somewhere in the house

lay long-forgotten models of telephones, radiometers, and dynamos. In the lumber-room were several antiquated cameras and a magic lantern. One evening Kirk and Mary were astonished at the actual arrival of a kinematograph, all complete, with heavy steel cylinders containing gas, a bundle of rubber tubes, and half a dozen boxes of accessories. At first Kirk took some natural interest in this thing, but presently he discovered the apparatus was not lent, but had been bought outright by his father, and the cost ran well over a hundred pounds. A month later the kinematograph stood covered with dust in a corner of the library, but more than once Mr. Clinton spoke of it. He intended, he said, to obtain films showing the perfect manipulation and deposition of concretes, the drilling and blasting of tunnels, the raising and placing of bridge-girders, the flow of water through orifices and over various weirs; the action of steam-navvies, the manufacture of steel, the stamping machinery of mines—and he would then lecture “like those Americans”—there was a great deal of money to be made in that way, said he. But he did nothing more, and the dust of a second month accumulated on the apparatus, for it was forbidden to be touched by any one. When Clinton next spoke of it, unconsciously desiring his listeners’ sympathy—the almost penniless Kirk burned with secret anger, and showed his contempt silently, by his expressionless face, and by his icy lack of interest, all of which his father noted. Later in the evening Kirk was absent without leave from prayers, and his father told Mary that her brother was “a callous, and, I much fear, an unspiritual youth;” and though she was so young, Kirk’s sister had learned it would be useless to protest. As a rule, she did not answer her father when he said these things, but often she felt it a duty to ask Kirk not to rail so bitterly; for Kirk had developed a biting criticism, and saw no good in his father. The young man had forgotten the father’s bravery and achievements—for which, as a boy, he had given genuine respect. But personal bravery appeals with greatest

force to women and children, and Kirk was now almost a man.

True, Kirk found it impossible not to admire his father's inborn skill and resource as an engineer; but in ordinary life he thought him most selfish, hypocritical, and narrow-minded.

It is not good for young engineers to be articled to their own fathers unless later on they are going into partnership. This possibly had been Clinton's idea three years ago, but now he, too, felt the incompatibility between himself and Kirk.

When a "pupil" has served articles for three or four years, the testimonial and influence of the engineer under whom he has learnt and served is of great importance in securing a first appointment. But, unaided by influence, of what value in the open market is the testimonial of a father?

Kirk had written to a public works contractor, a successful man who once had done work under Mr. Clinton both in France and England. After waiting a month Kirk had given up hope of a reply.

But during breakfast on a Monday morning in April, Kirk's father, after turning a letter over to examine the post-mark, handed it to Kirk, and watched suspiciously while his son read the contents, which were as follows:—

"Mr. K. Clinton, "London, April 2nd, 19 .
 "C/o Richard Clinton, Esq., M.I.C.E., M.I.M.E., etc.
 "The 'Gates,'
 "Severnly.

"DEAR SIR.—

"I can offer you a small berth as resident engineer on the Cirenhampton Water Scheme.

"Until I know what you can do, your salary would be at the rate of sixty-five pounds (£65) per annum. If you are prepared to accept this offer, please write me forthwith and say if you can report yourself at Cirenhampton (L. & S. W. Ry.) by mid-day on Monday next.

"Please give my kind regards to your father. I trust he is well.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES BENDIGO."

Kirk, cold and restrained in his father's presence—but highly delighted—handed the letter to him.

"I've got a berth, father. Cirenhampton Waterworks."

Mr. Clinton read the note, put it down, and said, incisively, "You have secured an appointment, is better English: the name is pronounced *Sisshampton*." He went on with his breakfast.

Mr. Clinton presently looked across the table at his son and noted the risen colour, sparkling eyes, and suppressed excitement. Should he prevent him . . . ? Write to old Mr. Bendigo . . . ? He did not admit it, but he felt his son would resist him, to some violent extreme, perhaps, most probably. He supposed then . . . as he finished his breakfast, that Kirkpatrick must really go. It meant he would have to employ and pay an extra assistant engineer. It was far too unlikely that he would find another pupil as clever as Kirkpatrick.

Having come to this conclusion, a new thought arose, and after a moment's mental calculation, he spoke it—

"Twenty-five shillings each week; you can keep yourself very well on that; young men should not have too much money." This was his sole remark for the present.

As soon as prayers were over, and after Kirk had spoken cheerily in the hall to Mary, he rushed off to the station, and three-quarters of an hour later he burst excitedly into his father's drawing office, waving the letter—

"Cirenhampton Water Scheme! Hurrah, you fellows! I'm off at last! out of this rotten life"——

The assistant engineers and the two pupils read the letter, and gave him congratulations, for they all liked him; he would always help a fellow in his work; he could always interpret Mr. Clinton's ideas, and they were all rather afraid of their chief. Twenty-five shillings per week seemed very much more to Kirk than to his brother-pupils, whom money matters had never troubled, for their parents were fairly wealthy and were normal.

Calming down a little, Kirk wrote on his father's special paper a letter to accept the appointment. He posted this precious letter himself, and then at once returned home, for his father was to attend a diaconal meeting that afternoon and would not go to the city.

For five years past Mr. Clinton had refused his son a sufficiency of clothes and money, and Kirk often had felt keenly the shabbiness of his own clothing. He had been too sensitive and proud to write Mrs. Athorpe on the subject. Besides, since his mother's death, she had never been invited to the "Gates." Indeed, the family had become very isolated. Even the ministers seldom came now to dine at Severnly.

Kirk forthwith needed ready money, and he feared his father's refusal. The matter would have to be settled at once. Mr. Clinton had not gone out, so Kirk went to him, and spoke respectfully—

"I shall want a little money, father; you see I don't possess a decent suit of clothes, nor have I a box or portmanteau—Edward and I always shared one before he went away. I don't want to go there like a beggar; then I have only just enough for the railway fare, and I shall have to live until I draw my first pay . . . and I shall never again cost you anything."

While Kirk spoke, his father had fidgeted crossly, and he now flung down a morning paper and stood up. For a moment he scanned Kirk.

"What is amiss with your clothes, sir?"

"The trousers are nearly through at the knees, father, look; and they are all frayed at the bottom—Mary has darned them twice—you see, father?" said Kirk, exhibiting the back of his trouser legs, and he added, "They are quite green, you see; they look so very shabby, and they are so short and small all over. The coat is no better. . . ."

His father reddened; he hated to be bothered in this way; it did not at all trouble him that his son was shabby; he had no idea how it felt to be shabby. He could not see that

so trivial a thing mattered for a boy; but he sought for words. It always angered him to find the least opposition to the powerful ascendancy he had exercised for so many years over his family.

With difficulty restraining his impatience, he spoke, "You do not need good clothes on engineering works," and he added with a superior contempt, "No one will expect you to arrive looking like a perfect dandy."

"I don't look very much like a dandy now, father," said Kirk, dispassionately, and he turned his frayed trousers more into view, looked at them, and stood there patiently. Neither spoke for a few seconds. His father sat down, took up the paper, and attempted to read it.

". . . If you will lend me a few pounds, I can get all I want, and I will pay you back all right, father. I give you my word of honour . . . you know that I would."

Kirk waited, and his father raised the paper brusquely, lowered it again, and said—

"It is a wrong principle, Kirkpatrick." Gripping the paper with both hands, he shook it fiercely to emphasize the remark as he repeated it. But he did not meet Kirk's eyes.

"Hundreds of young men are ruined every year by borrowing. No; I cannot go lending you money at the outset of your career. No. You will be receiving your regular salary; then you can get any luxuries you like. I have kept you and fed you for nineteen years; plenty of boys are earning their living at ten years of age; I am short of money at present, very short; I have no money to lend people."

"Well, father, I can't go there like this," persisted Kirk, looking away, "and at present I have only a few shillings of my own." His father wanted to read the paper; he was being interrupted most tiresomely; the subject of money had always been one highly distasteful; the mantelpiece was littered more than ever with sheaves of unpaid accounts. Mr. Clinton suddenly felt a hot irritation; red cords rose on his

forehead; he sat up rigidly, and stammered a moment before he spoke.

"The—the—the youth of this age is pampered and disobedient, a stubborn-and-rebellious-generation; if you were in the backwoods-of-America, you would be thankful to be well clothed, and have a good-home-to-shelter you!"

Kirk replied with an attempt at good humour, "Good Lord, father! you must see we are *not* in the backwoods of America!"

But his father angrily jumped up. "How dare you use that expression? I will have no swearing here. 'Thou shalt not take the name-of-the-Lord-thy-God-in-vain!' Remember-that!" fiercely cried he. He threw the paper down, glared at his son's cold, sarcastic face, and rapped out, "I know fathers who would take-the-skin-off-your-back, old-as-you-are-Sir!"

Kirk looked at his father and then turned slowly, muttering something to himself as he left the room. He shut the door too sharply. It was instantly re-opened; his father called after him, "I shall be glad when you leave this house; you have always stirred up your brother and sister to-rebel-against-their-father! You have an evil and callous mind!"

Kirk stood a moment to sneer the words "Minister of God!"—and then he left the house.

In the afternoon Kirk went into Severnly to see his father's tailor. He would get clothes without his father's consent.

"Mr. Cubell, I'm leaving home next Monday, and I want you to make me a suit, as quickly as possible, light tweed of some kind."

"Certainly, Sir. I'll just show you what we are doing a good many gentlemen in at present."

He began to pull out rolls of fine Cheviot, unfolding them, and wrapping them round his plump leg to show their appearance.

Kirk was greatly annoyed to feel a kind of inferiority in this large, quiet, well-lit, particularly prosperous shop; he hoped no one else would come in while he was there. Here it was so painfully obvious that he lacked clothes. He had read the "Clothes Philosophy"; but philosophy does not support the young. It is only a grim solace to the intellectual, when broken in spirit. Kirk was by no means broken in spirit, but he was very sensitive.

Mr. Cubell had taken his measure carefully in more ways than one. He had curtly transmitted his tape figures to a smart assistant in a large kind of glass and mahogany box; and now he kindly and cleverly manœuvred his customer beyond the ears of this assistant until Kirk and himself stood near the shop doors.

"You must please excuse me, Mr. Clinton; but do you intend to pay for this order before you go away?"

"No, Cubell; I can't; I want you to put it down to my father's account."

Mr. Cubell slowly folded his arms, and leaned back against his counter; he looked down and said gravely—

"I'm very sorry, Sir, but I really can't do that. You see your father owes me money now. I look on it as a bad debt; perhaps you don't know, Sir, that your father didn't place his last order here? . . . After the years I've done for him."

Kirk, likewise looking down, had blushed slowly to his ears, "the dark unbecoming blush of a man."

"No. I didn't know that. Well, Mr. Cubell, will you make them for me, and let me pay you as soon as I can, say in three months?"

The spruce old man looked searchingly at Kirk, at the truthful grey eyes, and was about to say yes, for he felt that he could trust him; but Kirk, already outraged and humiliated, stung to the quick by this pause, abruptly said, "Good morning, Cubell," and left the shop, smarting with vexation and shame, and, as he walked, he cursed his father.

He imagined how differently himself would treat a son. Oh, how differently!

The "Old Lane" was a much longer way back to the "Gates," but it was secluded.

On the way home he decided he would have to sell his geological collection. Anything rather than ask some one to lend him money, be refused, and go again through the humiliation he had felt in that shop.

Immediately after lunch Kirk went to a young geological friend who was well supplied with money, and who often had bought duplicates from Kirk's collection. They had together sometimes made excursions, and Kirk, ever willing and eager to impart any knowledge he possessed, had taught him the elements of stratigraphy, and how to proceed in the field, map in hand. In return, young Minnitt now and then lent Kirk his cycle, and thus enabled him to visit distant fields of search.

"Minnitt, you can have my collection for five pounds if you will buy it to-day; I am leaving home, and want some money; in fact, I must have it."

"No!! Going away? Why, where are you going to, Clinny, old man? What's the geology like?"

Kirk gave him some particulars, and then passed lightly over the fatherly interview.

"As to geology, it will be in the Chalk and Eocene."

"By Jove! the Eocene! lucky beggar!" exclaimed Minnitt, and they shortly returned to the "Gates," and went up to Kirk's bedroom, where he kept his collection.

He had there fitted up a number of heavy shelves, on which were arranged, in perfect scientific order, some two thousand specimens.

To obtain these Kirk had walked hundreds and hundreds of miles. He had found with his own eyes and fingers the great majority. A small number were absolutely unique; and of these he had made casts, colouring and finishing them

by his own methods and with such uncommon artistic skill that only by actual handling could geologists themselves detect the real from the unreal.

Kirk gave generously, and some of his beautiful casts may still be seen in several national museums.

Every one of these silent things on the shelves had its own associations, its glamour, a place in his imagination, and in his affection.

For Kirk, an endearment of recollection clung to each of these slowly-garnered treasures. To him alone, they spoke of many a long, happy, and often solitary day spent in the friendly countryside, for twenty miles around. Some were gifts from great geologists; and all were cherished, labelled, dusted, and brooded over as he dressed or undressed. No one touched them but himself. The vision of these one-time ferns and insects, of these fish, trilobites, old pearly nautili and reptiles of ancient seas, fascinated Kirk, and filled him with deep thought when he dreamed over them, or with happiness when he remembered the silent, beautiful woodlands, under which, after their remotely past life, they had come to find a resting-place.

To Kirk, geology was a noble field for vast imaginations. It was indeed the second science, ranking second only to the human penetrations of eternal space.

He had absorbed the scientific side of geology with marked intuitional ease; but the solemn order, the profound vision of the procession of ancient upward life, the mightier horizons evoked—these he dwelt on with secret intense thought. And often the exceeding sadness of the ever-passed-away overcame him.

He had collected since he was a boy of twelve.

A great piece of ammonite weighing twenty-five pounds had been brought here on his back, carried by stages fifteen miles one frozen day of March. A much heavier slab, splendidly ripple-marked, and pitted by heavy drops of rain that fell millions of years before the dawn of man—this, Kirk

had brought home by sledge over seven miles of ice-bound canal. Here, too, on a special shelf, were the few and rare treasures garnered from the long search in the ravine.

All these neatly-spread small things, these heavy-written slabs set on edge in the best light, had been personally carried here, along miles and miles of the roads or lanes that radiated from Severnly town towards Tewkesbury, Malvern, Bredon and Pendock in the south, to the Liassie Shakespeare border of old Warwickshire on the east, and towards Ledbury, far westward.

Kirk had brought some of them even from those distant hills that look down on the battlefields of Edge Hill, and from the new distant collieries northwards—that rose amid yet unsullied cowslips and hawthorn blossom in their seasons. But especially had Kirk roamed the deep clayey lands of the Blue Lias, where the limekilns send their smoke-drifts trailing away over the treeless meadows. And, gazing on his treasures, he remembered many a secluded rocky face, yellow or red, hidden far away in the rich woodlands of Arden and the Worcestershire border, that he had sought out, examined, and mused upon.

Ambitions had grown in Kirk to make such a collection that it would be acceptable in part or in whole by the national museums, when the time came. He knew already that his ravine fossils were all most rare, and would be gratefully accepted by any national museum in the world.

On this important, fateful day, he stood still, and with troubled eyes scanned his favourite specimens. They were so much more than scientific to him. He felt, now it came to the pinch, that he could not possibly part with some among them. In his long fingers he took up the small pink slab which held his two *novo species*, the *rhynconella*, which had been named after him, and was one of those specimens he meant to keep. He laid the small slab upon his bed. The faintly impressed shells on the slab were new to the world—

two new species on one bit of pale pink shale! He chose also some slender brown dorsal spines of fish, and a few of the opal-like palatal teeth. These spines and teeth were very great rarities. Beside them he laid the perfect, large, seal-like paddle of a baby *plesiosaurus*—of a baby sea lizard. Also he put aside one fine fragment of a silicified Permian conifer—an archaic pine-tree. This fossil wood had been polished laboriously by Kirk, so that now it showed all the structure of wood, though harder than steel, and exquisitely coloured as a precious agate by the pink, yellow, black and brown silica.

“Everything else you can have, Minnitt.”

“Oh! but by Jove, Clinton, you know . . . I had counted absolutely on having this, and this.” He fingered carefully those things laid on the bed.

“Dash it, man! As it is you are getting a huge bargain. Why! that ichthyosaurus head alone is worth I don’t know what! . . . However, I cannot let these be lost; it would be a sin. I cannot do it. They go to London to-morrow.”

“But they’re just the very best things you have.”

Kirk paused, his anger rose; he loathed meanness, and he knew Minnitt understood the position.

He began to wrap up his chosen things, each separately, in plenty of soft paper.

“Well, Minnitt, I shall send them every one to the museums unless you take the crowd as they are . . . though I don’t know what the devil to do for money.”

“Four-pounds-ten,” said Minnitt.

“No; five.”

“I won’t give you more than four-fifteen,” said Minnitt—always his father’s son.

Kirk walked away, looked out of the window, came back, and said, “Very well, I accept that.”

“Right!”

“Very well. I’ll begin wrapping them up for you, we can get them downstairs and away by four o’clock or so.”

"I shall not take anything else out of the collection, Minnitt," added Kirk, austere.

"Oh, no, no! I know that, old man. I'll go now and get the money from the mater. I'm not paying it out of my own pocket, and I'll bring our gardener along at once with a barrow and he can keep fetching them."

Half-an-hour later, while the two wrapped the fossils up, using quantities of old newspaper, Kirk said: "Minnitt, you will not go and let these things be lost and thrown into some old box-room, will you?"

"Rather not!"

"If you ever get tired of them, will you send the best to London? Or let me know? I would buy them back. . . . All these fossil *Arachnidae** ought to go—you would give them in your own name; it would be rather nice, you know, 'Presented by A. L. Minnitt, of Severnly.'"

Minnitt stood up and smiled at Kirk.

"Clinton! What a rum chap you are! That would be rather ripping! Well, if I do get sick of them, I'll do what you ask, there! but I shall not."

"Thank you very much indeed. That is a promise. . . . It would be such a great pity, so wretched, for them to be covered with dust, and all forgotten, and at last be thrown away by some ignorant person. . . . I almost wish they were all back in their ancient graves."

Before they parted, his friend said, "Give me your address, Clinton, and if you ever come back, come and put up at our place, will you?"

". . . Why, it's very good of you!" said Kirk, surprised; it had not occurred to him that he would ever come back. "I should be very glad to."

He hastened off to order his clothes, but not, of course, from Mr. Cubell.

* Fossil spiders.

CHAPTER XVI

MARY during this important week more than once spoke to her father about Kirk. Her gentle nature happily brought father and son to civil terms. Doubtfully she divined that Mr. Clinton felt some stirring of affection over the approaching departure of Kirk, for he was a strange man, and not readily to be understood. He certainly relented a little and, through Mary, he informed Kirk that he would give him two pounds.

"I'll give it to him, I'll give it to him, child; leave me now," replied Mr. Clinton to Mary's last hint that the money should be given at once, for it was Sunday evening, and Kirk was to leave early next morning. Her brother counted on the forty shillings to pay his fare, about eight and six; and the remainder, with what he had left of his own, would keep him for a month until he received his first pay.

Next morning, an hour before Kirk was to leave the house, Mary knocked at her father's bedroom door and standing outside spoke to him. None knew better than she how to mingle the gentleness and the persistence that alone gained success with Mr. Clinton in these too common emergencies.

Kirk listened anxiously to her; if she could not get the money he thought he would have to rush over to Minnitt's, as a last resource. Mary had offered him ten shillings of her own, but up to now he had refused; it would not suffice. He could not touch her little hoard. Unexpectedly, from inside the bed-room Mr. Clinton replied—

"I am myself going to see Kirkpatrick away, Mary."

"But, father dear, you will be late, he will miss his train!"

She heard a brisk noise begin. He was getting up; the door opened slightly—

"My bath, turn it on, quick, quick, child!" commanded Mr. Clinton. Some strange reversion had seized him. He came down earlier than usual; and walked off breakfastless accompanied by Kirk and Mary. They had just enough time, but Kirk was very harassed, and wished to go quickly in case the clock were wrong; yet even Mary was powerless to hasten her father. He had acquired a habit of exactly measuring the time to go to a station. He was never in good time, he never ran, yet he rarely missed a train.

This morning he went to the booking-office, bought a ticket to Cirenhampton, and arrived coolly on the platform as the express drew up. He gave the ticket, the change from a sovereign, and another sovereign, to his son.

Kirk put his arms round Mary, strained her to himself, kissed her, and then got in. She was in tears. Her last words were—

"You look so nice in your things, dear. . . . Write to-night."

Through the window he shook hands with Mr. Clinton.

"Good-bye, father."

"Good-bye, Kirkpatrick" . . . Mr. Clinton gave his last command—

"Kirkpatrick, avoid women; they would be your especial downfall. And remember, there can be no success without God. I wish you well."

Kirk waved his handkerchief to Mary until he passed out of sight. Then he sat down on a book he had put there. He moved it further along, and smiled. It was Richard Jefferies' "Field and Hedgerow"; the title read plainly in silver on a dark maroon back. It was a glimpse of this book, thought he, that prompted his father's last words. He had, a few months earlier, ordered Kirk to take Jefferies' works "from under this roof, sir! An abominable man! a

man who actually places woman higher than his God. Out with them at once! or I will burn them."

"I am free at last," thought Kirk, and smiled again.

He was actually on the way to Cirenhampton, in the train, and his relief was great.

About eleven o'clock, when twenty miles from Cirenhampton the train entered a wide valley that lay between the southern gorsy heaths. In the distance were peeps of the high downs that Kirk had so often read of. Now the train was running through lush meadows in their April glory of yellow flowers. A white chalk-pit gleamed among the hanging woods, and Kirk grew excited by the scenery and exquisite southerliness.

He was so saturated at this time with Richard Jefferies' influence that now, when he saw the lesser grebes on a backwater of this broad swirling chalk-stream, he desired eagerly to point them out to a stiff lady and her daughter, who sat opposite in the carriage; but the elder woman's face forbade him. They would not know, thought he, how rare at Severnly were these water-birds.

Wild things and creatures gave him such keen delight; but he was not of the race of "naturalists." Grebes were not just birds to him; no, they were of the unknown, of Richard Jefferies' Nature, and Kirk, too, like Jefferies, felt deeply the ecstacy of the wild flowers, and was so conscious of the rich miracle in which he lived.

Two men awaited Kirk at Cirenhampton station. The younger, Charlie Bendigo, walked somewhat unquietly up and down the platform; he looked at every girl, briskly swung his cane, squared his shoulders, lit another cigarette, and often turned back smartly a step or two, to say something gay to his spare, large-limbed and hawk-eyed companion, who walked slouchingly, deliberately, aggressively, and looked powerful of both physique and mind. Charlie wore excellent cord riding-breeches, perfect leggings, the

shiniest brown boots, and large spurs. His very close-cut dark coat showed a marked waist. The shoulders were sharply square, and tight with padding. An over-heavy gold chain crossed his light waistcoat. A neat jewelled pin pierced his cravat low down. Beneath the latest tweed cap his small blue eyes twinkled and laughed in a sunburnt and pointed face. His dark moustache, trimmed carefully and very waxed, hid the mouth. He was by no means a bad-looking fellow, but his type made a great contrast with Bill Colquhoun. The elder man—who looked forty-five but was ten years older—wore thin grey tweed, well cut, but somewhat worn, and short in the sleeves. The big bony hairy wrist showed beyond the sleeve and the flannel shirt. A grey bowler of large size well suited him. His keenly intelligent and large dark eyes habitually levelled themselves at men and things with an air of critical command. They were a good pair of eyes, and set well apart in a strong face of bronze. The semi-Roman nose and clear-cut mouth belonged indubitably to those falcon eyes. Protruding quite fifteen inches from his right-hand coat pocket were the two ends of a valuable rolled-up plan. Bill hated carrying things in the hand, so he had doubled up the roll in its middle, and thrust the crumpled nose made in the unfortunate thing, deep into his large pocket. The two projecting rolled ends that widened from each corner of the pocket, his negligent tie, his pocket-flaps half pushed in or unbuttoned, accentuated his large-minded air. One sensed an impatience with the trivial or the mean of spirit.

“Mr. Clinton?”

“Yes.”

“Pleased to meet you, Clinton,” said Charlie, with genuine good feeling and a rather sweet smile. “This is Bill, Mr. William Colquhoun, our walking bummer.”

The eyes of Kirk and Bill met squarely. One second of keen intuition passed. They liked each other. Then Bill put his great hand forward, still intently looking. They loosed

hands, and the hawk-eyes looked downwards and sideways, and Bill spoke with a kind of stern reminiscent emotion. "Sir, I worked for your Forther, Mr. Clinton . . . when I was young . . . I was at Issac. . . . You've got his own look about you."

A man of somewhat few words, Colquhoun habitually spoke slowly, and with a peculiar deliberation and emphasis. He was Scottish by descent, but had been born and bred in London.

It was just noon, the men's dinner-hour would be from one to two, and Charlie proposed they should all three visit a near-by section of the work, "and we can tell Clinton things as we go along." Kirk asked questions, made remarks, and began picking up threads of the work and its problems. The head-works and wells were being built and sunk at Daisy Mead, two miles outside the town, and for the present they inspected a length of deep trench for a large incoming main. Kirk noted with great interest the uncommon marls, peat, clays and gravels, cut through by the trench; but he said nothing of this.

Bill observed with silent satisfaction that Kirk knew what he spoke about, and further he learned quickly that Kirk quite understood the social system, the peculiar and rigid etiquette of Public Works. Presently they left the trenches and went towards the centre of the town. Kirk would have lunch with Charlie.

When they drew near an hotel, where Bill knew there was a good-looking girl, he turned to Charlie, and said languidly—

"Ain't it about time we hed a drink, Morster Chorlie?"

"Yes, I think it is! Let's go in here."

Bill, whose face showed a faint, hard, sardonic smile, went in behind him. Charlie felt his tie, re-twisted his moustache, and then from breeches-pocket ostentatiously drew forth a handful of sovereigns and put them on the bar. He

picked one out and gave it to the saucy girl, who evidently well knew him.

"The usual for me and Bill, Mabel. Mr. Clinton? I don't know what you take?"

"Ginger-beer, please."

She put the drinks down, and jerked her chin away from Charlie's hand. Bill's drink seemed to be merely a small tumbler of water; and he turned to Kirk, saying in a calm, cynical kind of way—

"I'm a'most a tectotaller, myself, Sir."

Charlie laughed; and Kirk laughed out of politeness, but could not see the joke. Later on, he found Bill drank undiluted gin, and gin only.

To impress Clinton and the pretty girl Charlie gave way to an impulse. He looked gravely at Bill and spoke in a business-like voice—

"I've been out to Daisy Mead this morning." He sipped before he went on, but Bill at once smiled cynically and said good-humouredly—

"Did you get to see 'er then, Morster Chorlie?"

The girl and Kirk both smiled, but taking no notice Charlie continued in a louder voice: "And I must say you're not making much of a job of it. There! Why! you'll have the timbering in! especially No. 3 shaft, if you aren't careful."

Bill stood up, large, indignant, his eyes on Charlie. This was an unforgivable slander upon his reputation, and purposely made in the presence of the new engineer, and before a nice girl—and he saw why. He fiercely gulped down his drink, thrust back his hat from his great forehead, and glared at Charlie. He would humble him indeed! He spoke deliberately: with astonishment, indignation, contemptuous sarcasm —

"Ye-oo! . . . Ye-oo! . . . 'oo *are* ye-oo? It's becawse of *ye-oo*, we ain't gort enaff timber! Why, yer *encle* keeps *you*! Bin with yer *encle*, for ten years, and don't know natthin'

nar. Cornt use a theodolite; orfter ten years! Cornt earn yr —— livin'! You orter be ashimed of y'rself, coming out like this agin *me*, before a hingineer, and one as looks as if 'e worze a hingineer."

Drawing breath and standing up squarely, Bill put his glass down and pushed it further on to the counter.

"Yr kin *tell* yr encle, *end* your Forther, what I say;" and turning round the big man went out of the hotel, followed in a few minutes by Kirk, and reluctantly by young Bendigo, who was as red as though his face had been struck.

The lie of the land was now clear to Kirk. He judged that young Bendigo was not equal to his post, was not trained in engineering, ran after girls, and could not get on with his manager. Therefore himself, Kirk, had been appointed more or less to replace Charlie—his chicf's nephew. . . . It would require nice handling.

Feeling glum and sulky, Charlie solaced himself at lunch with a very large whiskey and soda, and by the time he had devoured a good steak and seen the bottom of the glass moodiness had left him. Suddenly smiling, he threw down his serviette. He sat up and stuck his chest out. He twisted his moustache, and burst into a hearty laugh—that showed his white and even teeth.

"*Dear* old Bill! *Isn't* he a character? So touchy! Thinks he ought to have charge of the job, you know. Dear old mother, he is! Of course he's been with the Old Man since he was a boy. Thinks he knows more than any engineer! So jealous! But you'll like him, Clinton! All right when you know him. He's not a bad sort. Bit difficult at times; can't bear to be criticised. I have to have a bit of a row with him about once a month, just to let him know who's master. But there's more work on now than Bill can manage; so you and me are to run the works together. I'm agent, of course, and you'll be my engineer. I shall leave all that side to you."

It was not long before Kirk found that Charlie had cer-

tainly been in full charge of the work, and that he was supposed to be an engineer; but, except for good care of the stables he had soon left all real management to Bill. The setting out with level and theodolite had become dependent on the caprice and good-will of the Clerk of the Works, who represented the London engineers who designed the scheme. These engineers but rarely visited the works. Colquhoun had become very much overworked, and greatly hampered by lack of an engineer-in-residence; the works, too, were daily extending, and it was Colquhoun who privately had asked Mr. Bendigo for help, resulting in Kirk's appointment.

CHAPTER XVII

LIVING was cheap at Cirenhampton. Kirk found pleasant rooms in one of several small villas. These stood behind pretty gardens in John-and-Mary Road, a quiet place on the border of the town. The odd name of this road had first enticed him. His landlady was a quiet, clean, respectable woman. Although past fifty-five, her cheeks were rosy, her face attractive, her dark hair still abundant. For some years she had remained a widow; but, being of very independent mind, she brooded over the fact that she was become largely dependent on her children's contributions. She grieved that she caused them an expense. So, suddenly, she married a Church of England *colporteur*. The wedding cards gave her children the first intimation, and they all promptly fell out with her, poor soul.

Her new husband decided where she was to live. Three or four months often passed between his visits. He was a *colporteur* in the Church Army, and travelled all Oxfordshire in a van, selling tracts and books, and preaching the gospel. His wife knew no one at Cirenhampton, and had made few acquaintances. She told Kirk her troubles, bit by bit. The very pretty young woman whom Kirk saw when he arrived was her youngest daughter, married two years ago. All her other children refused even to write to her. It was a pity her new husband had such an ugly name. . . .

Kirk could give no philosophic advice, but he did feel sympathy for her. Often he purposely led her into conversation, because he saw it eased her and that she was rather lonely. He always smiled and spoke when she brought in his meals—unless he happened to be too deep in a book—and besides,

she was such a clean, well-mannered, bright-faced, honest soul, one could not help liking her.

Life at Cirenhampton was to make the inherent duality of Kirk's character become very pronounced. He lived to the full, whether in his practical life or in his idealistic life, but between them he set a locked door. The spare evenings of the first month and all free Sundays he spent in delicious dreams and explorations in the new country-side.

In this same month he dined a few times with Charlie, who, after dinner, initiated Kirk in the art of billiards.

Kirk by rare special invitation went to tea at Bill's house; and Bill several times came round to Kirk's rooms. When Bill made a visit he would come in and sit down deferentially, and tell Kirk shrewd and amusing stories about work; and presently he would bring forth a crumpled plan or sketch and sound Kirk's ideas on the best methods to be pursued. One evening Bill found himself surprisingly disappointed because Kirk was out, and in future he gave early notice of his calls.

Kirk laid in—not for himself—a supply of gin, and this attention raised him further in Bill's estimation. But the elder man made his visits fewer, and never took more than three good drinks on each occasion. He knew he was a very much richer man than Kirk. When Kirk first went to Bill's house, he was very much surprised to find Mrs. Colquhoun immensely fat, for she was the mother of the two neat, pretty little maids, who went to the Girls' High School, and whom Bill one morning in the town had introduced to Kirk, with a very lordly and a fatherly pride.

Their house seemed to be full of gilded clocks under glass shades. Kirk certainly counted four in the front room. During tea Bill pointed solemnly to the largest, and said—

"I've promised to give *thet* to Morster Chorlie, as a little enkeregement."—"Win 'e gits merried!" added Bill, smiling cynically, while Mrs. Bill really shook with good-natured mirth.

Kirk had been on the work only three weeks when Bill first came round to his room, and was shown in.

"Good evening, Sir," had said Colquhoun. "Maybe you wouldn't mind stepping round and looking at the most cussed pump the Old Man ever bought for us?" and Bill drew his breath in with dissatisfaction, and glanced down darkly, right and left.

They went out together. It was just dusk. A deep excavation for the extensive foundations of a massive water-tower was in progress close to the river, and two roaring lights—known on public works as "Lucy Janes"—lit up the crowd of men. One-half of them were in thigh-waders and overalls, and should have been continuing the excavation and its careful timbering in the wet bottom. But, instead, they lounged idly between the piled-up earth, sand, gravel, brick-stacks, and spare timber. The belts from a pair of very large portable engines were driving at a rocking pace, a double-pulleyed, twelve-inch centrifugal pump. Men were strengthening the massive staging that it occupied, and a boy continuously brought and poured water over one of the bearings to help keep it cool. But only a miserably attenuated stream of water and a loud, steady, empty roar issued from the mouth of the big pump. Two other steam pumps were hard at work, but could not keep the water down. All these idling men were making "time-and-a-half" for night-work. They could not enter the excavations, for these were half full of water, the work being in deep saturated sands and flint gravels.

Bill spoke with great resentment as he and Kirk approached the scene of operations.

"Every blorsted thing ready for the night—the mill as you arranged, Sir, drawring the water dahn at eleven; every man we wornt is 'ere, seventy-nine of 'em, and nar! the blorsted pemp weaunt work!" Bill's feelings rose in a vicious crescendo.

"End these blorsted villagers *a-lorfin'* et us, Sir!" vexedly

added he. London was the only town, all else were "villages."

Kirk and Bill now went up and looked very closely over the large pump; she was making some thousand revolutions a minute, and the heavy staging trembled strongly over the dark water.

"What about the foot-valves?" asked Kirk.

"Cornt find nething wrong, Sir—Ginger, 'ee's a bleddy pengwin, s' stripped 'isself twice and dived down to 'em—'ee ses they're eb-so-lootly free and clear—workin-easy. Cornt think wort the 'ell's wrong!"

Bill felt the main bearings—scowled at the boy and shouted in his ear—"Yr not keepin' 'er cool, yr lazy young 'ell-bag! Put it on *thicker!* Dem yer!"

Kirk, after watching the flying belts, stooped again over the pump, and then stood up quickly. He drew Bill further from the pump, and spoke decisively—

"Stop her, Colquhoun."

Bill passed on the order.

As the engines slowed down the drivers opened their fire-boxes, and the unused steam instantly began a deafening and increasing roar through the safety valves.

"Why! Bill!" shouted Kirk in his ear. "Isn't she running the wrong way? . . ."

Indeed, it was so, but Kirk showed no shadow of a smile—for he did not wish to hurt Bill's feelings. Bill himself with furious vigour ran to the drivers and cursed them sharply—the engines were wedged and jacked forward, the belts were crossed, and soon the pump restarted. Quickly a full volume of water burst forth, filled the shoots and began rushing off steadily to the river.

Bill that night wore a very "fancy" pair of trousers. With a grim face he watched the water sink rapidly. He was consumed with anger and chagrin. It would be disgusting for Charlie to hear of this. He knew young Mr. Clinton would never tell. But what about gossip and the

men? . . . When only two or three feet of water remained, he called out cynically, and forcibly—

“Now, you old invalid women in the bloody boots! git in here!”

He himself climbed down and dropped the last eight feet into the shallowing water, offering up his light new trousers to the gods. Quickly he was surrounded by his men, some of them well-nigh up to their waists in water, for Bill invariably inspired them, and ever treated those well who were deserving. The sheet-piling began to go down; the summer night shook with heavy blows, two or three together; and the work went forward. There was no need for Kirk to remain. He knew with great secret joy that in the estimations of Bill and all the men he had made a record, he had soared amazingly.

In less than two months, Kirk's early hours, his accurate and quick work with level, tacheometer or theodolite, his energy and foresight in keeping up the full supply of materials and plant, his prompt assistance and advice, his resourcefulness in difficulties, had earned him a firm footing on the works, and the cemented friendship of Colquhoun. In addition, Kirk was well-liked by men and gangers. For he had the happy gift that he could say to them a most funny or familiar thing, without the slightest loss of discipline. He was firm, but modest. He was gentlemanly, but he put on no airs, and could speak with any one of them.

Gradually, the work of both the agent and the engineer came into Kirk's hands. He it was now who made all arrangements with landowners, with local tradesmen and authorities.

Old Mr. Bendigo had for many years bred his own horses. He said this did not pay financially, but was a hobby. The fifty-odd horses at Cirenhampton remained under the direct care of Charlie, who understood their proper stabling, feeding, and management. He loved horses, and would have made a clever veterinary surgeon. He had

marked power over horses, and also over a certain kind of girl.

It was Charlie's daily ecstasy, when, firmly seated on a fine black polished thoroughbred, a gift from his uncle—he curvetted slowly along the main street of Cirenhampton. This spirited horse reared every few yards and pranced now on, now off, the flagged pavement, and more than one pretty girl's heart beat faster, for Charlie was a born rake and by nature and practice easily made his kind of love, not to one, but to three or four at once, in this small town.

Considerable friction at last arose between young Bendigo and Clinton, the real point at issue being the chiefship of the works.

Colquhoun, a most astute diplomatist, secretly fomented this state of things, and, without Kirk knowing it, he powerfully backed him up; for he had liked Kirk from their very first interview. He had given him much advice, always respectfully yet always feeling quite aware of his own superior and wide practical experience—always excepting steam pumps.

In addition to settling purely engineering matters, it was become part of Kirk's duty to determine day by day the work and distribution of the fifty horses and a traction-engine. He had to regulate the supply and delivery of materials for the many different sections of work, and arrange all in advance, so that there should be no loss of time or money, through bad organisation, through lack of timber, cement, stone, steelwork, tools, repairs, parts of machinery, new and old iron pipes, valves, fittings, bricks, sand, coal, oil, water supply, and so on.

When Kirk came to Cirenhampton Charlie was especially busy, for he had two strings to his bow of Cupid in the town itself, and also was laying siege to a slim and flighty girl a few miles down the valley, at the "Angler's Rest." Charlie also had a great friend in the local "vet," and now he rode

frequently with him to distant farms and sales, and had made two good bargains for his uncle. Charlie and his friend were both skilled at billiards, and, between horses, billiards, and hot love-affairs, Charlie appeared on the works seldom more than twice or thrice a week.

For a whole fortnight now, Kirk had scarcely spoken with him at all during the day-time, except on Saturday mornings when Charlie, accompanied by Kirk, went to the bank, signed the cheque for his uncle, drew the wages money and saw it paid out. Charlie was the person officially accredited to conduct correspondence with the London office, but Kirk, with Bill's frequent counsel and assistance, now wrote all orders, letters, and advice-notes, and after office hours would take the most important to be signed by young Bendigo.

Charlie for some two months was well content to leave all to the new engineer. But lately, his hotel-bar friends had conveyed in conversation hints of a loss of honour and responsibility. But the very quick of Charlie's vanity was sharply touched when one evening—in the middle of a billiard-match—some insistent talkers stopped to look at him, while one of them asked:

"Mister Bendigo, we're argying about ye and Mr. Clinton, which o' t'other o' ye is really the master?"

Charlie, reddening with vexation before the crowded room, replied, "Why! me, of course!"

"Thank'ee, Mister Bendigo—thank'ee!—There, gentlemen!" said the farmer laughing bucolically—"I've won me munney!" And every one else laughed.

Charlie awoke next morning with a head, ate very little breakfast, and left his rooms about ten o'clock. He was in no very good humour. He met a carter and asked him where he was going. The man pulled up his horse, and told him. Charlie peremptorily ordered him elsewhere. Then, glancing down at his ultra-fashionable riding-breeches, he swaggered off through the town, called at a bar and had a double-stiff whiskey and soda, and immediately went out.

He would just show every one who was the real boss at Cirenhampton. It might disarrange things a bit, but what the devil of that? The job was paying twenty-five per cent. He stopped every driver he met and gave him new, and senseless orders. The traction engine of the firm soon blocked the main street at a narrow place while it manœuvred an immediate return under Charlie's satisfied and foolish eye. He stood rakishly a few yards from the small crowd that looked on. He swore at the driver when he broke two kerb-stones. But the driver—a very good man—flushed up and swore back at him, then deliberately backed his engine further. The heavy wheels of the trailer-wagon at once badly smashed the paving of the foot-path.

By lunch-time all was in confusion; several navvies and time-keepers came in together at headquarters with messages of missing materials that had not arrived, and were urgently in request. Quite non-plussed, Kirk was just setting off in haste to see about all this trouble when Colquhoun, hot and angry, met him at the office door. Bill entered, took his hat off, violently threw it on the floor, and wiped his broad forehead.

"It's thet bleckhead bin rahnd agin, Mr. Clinton! but 'e won't do it agin; I've seen 'im, and cussed 'im, and I've wired to 'is encle to come dahn!"

"You should not have done that, Bill. That is my business."

"I've put it wuss nur you could put it, Sir, and I've been with the Old Man twenty-five years. Don't go for to think I was usurping your authority, Sir, but me and the Old Man knows Chorlie better nor you. An' I don't wornt 'im to be your enemy. I *knoo* what it would be when 'e kem,—an' when you kem, Sir!" said Bill, getting warmer and the Cockney coming out of him. "Sooner or liter, orn *heach* jorb, 'e hess to *ge-au*; or be'ive hisself!"

Old Mr. Bendigo came down next day and saw Kirk and

Bill together, and then Charlie, and from that day Kirk was left untrammelled and in full charge, subject as a very young engineer, to Bill's fatherly and respectful advice.

Charlie was too weak or too generous to hate or retain anger, and his sulkiness rapidly vanished. Soon he was again quite happy. He was still the important man on Saturday when he and Kirk went to the bank, and he gave out that his business was the financial side of the work. He had a good deal of generosity of a kind, and he bore Kirk no ill-will. He remained friendly to him, and Kirk on his side carefully avoided wounding Charlie's vanity.

With the busy yet romantic South England town Kirk from the first was charmed. It was so light of hue, so clean, so kindly, and yet so ancient. In the evenings and on holidays Kirk explored, wandered in, and was enraptured by the South. Here, felt Kirk, human life had always held a deep civilisation, that would ever be unknown to Midland, Celtic, and the Northern folk.

His eager mind and body drank in the new airs with delight. The whole world was before him in those days. Vague ambitions stalked like Thor through his imagination. His consciousness seemed so great; he felt that success—yes, even fame and immortality—awaited him, in some direction.

Time lay ahead to a boundless horizon. What would come? Far away seemed to sparkle some future culmination that was splendid.

The sweetness of the South country entered into him. The Midlands were heavy; there one thought more slowly,—like the crimson fox-gloves, pondering in the deep shade of noon, under the great trees. There the rivers flowed slowly, with power, deep, unrippled, and the red earth, though dear to him, was yet heavy, dormant, and sober. There the wood-pigeons faintly clapped and murmured in the shadowy depths, and nightingales thrilled far in the solemn woods,

in the silence of the still moon, in the lofty chancels of that ancient forest-land.

But this dear South country took him by the hand. A hundred larks sang in the air, trees were so young and green and growing. Even in old age, they were somehow young. The gayest flowers were so plenteous. Rivers ran so swift and clear and swirling. The big trout rose and walloped briskly. The green hedgeless downs spread themselves in floods of light. The fresh air—dry and translucent—streamed joyously past from the not so far away blue sea. Brown and red and white and yellow flints—so pleasant hued—made warm fields, warm roads, light soils. The dear South came to him like a young laughing girl, and he fell in love with her for ever. Surely this was his own land.

CHAPTER XVIII

KIRK was keenly engrossed and energetic in the work, so long as he was in the midst of it; but when the day's labour ended he hastened to leave it far behind.

The sweating men, their curses, their striving, the planning and directing, the strong shrewd humour of men—all faded to forgotten unrealities. He sought solitudes.

He hastened in the evenings to lay his hands in those of his young goddess, Nature; who hid among the blossomed hawthorns, waiting for him, clothed in dewy gossamer, bugled and spangled with the starry treasures of the flowering earth. Then they roamed together, musing and filled with sweet converse, while the souls of the flowers poured themselves up in countless aspiring hosts. Fragrant lady-smock in hundreds—sweet enough and pure enough to lie in the bosom of a girl; thousands of the golden kingcups glowing in the marshy carrs; buttercups uncountable, millions upon millions—wide tropics of yellow gold enriching and enriching beyond the ken.

There he wandered in these evenings of June, as roamed Perseus in ancient Thessaly, meeting Immortals and setting forth solemnly and joyously upon his dear quest, his great travel.

Kirk lived vividly in his fine sensuous mind and body, deeply understanding the flowers, entering into the delight and beauty of the sky and earth with ecstasy, with a pure intoxication.

But his spirit sometimes stood as it were afar off, and waited; knowing what had gone long before, and what was again to come—listening with an overwhelming fear of sorrow for the first far-off sound of the pursuer.

One Sunday morning in June Kirk walked out towards the high downs. He chose bye-ways, and went through deep lanes, worn for centuries in the chalk. The vertical chalky sides of these well-nigh forgotten tracks were clothed richly with flowers and with grasses—cranesbill showed against the creamy rock, tall red and white champions reached up, and about his feet the most brilliant of blue veronica jewelled the deep grass through which he gently waded. He came upon a thousand tall Canterbury bells standing in one great clump—glorious wild-flowers full of purple depth. Glimpses of high smooth downs showed through gaps and the rare gateways. The oaks were very late; the young leaves were all tanned delicately to an ochreous pink, and pink-cheeked oak-apples were among them. Thick pollard oaks and ash-trees crouched over these deep hot lanes. Wild clematis and opening honeysuckle festooned the lower branches of the scented May. When near the foot of Junipen he left the lane to go into a large and long-deserted chalk-pit. One side of the deep recess was dazzling white, the other, in grateful shade.

How silent and hot it was inside. . . . No sound came but a faintly carried snatch of lark-song, that ineffably moved him; and once again, when a bee swept over the white chasm from edge to edge, singing on the wind an eager happy note. Full of a sweet wonder and poetry, intensely conscious of the Earth and all her beauty, Kirk ascended the huge down, mounting slowly up the dry mossy grass.

Having reached the summit, he lay down on his back in a hollow—as had done his beloved Richard Jefferies—and he looked straight up into space.

The summer "Winds of Heaven," laden with the scented breath of beanfields, drew up the smooth slopes beyond him, leaped over the hollow, and left him in almost still air. He could hear the soft fingers of the air drawn through the gorse and the grass. And at last a low intermittent rhapsody of sheep-bells made him rise: and he lay on his breast and

looked down; there, far below him, he saw a countless flock of sheep, with one shepherd. No faint rattling of myriad hoofs ascended; only the musical "ponkling," now heard, now carried away by the hot zephyrs.

Far away to the south and hiding the sea lay the Downs, stretching east and west, far as eye could reach. A tiny gap marked ancient Winchester.

Between Kirk and those downs there seemed to lie a valley of vast width; full of trees and fields and woods that faded into one another. The distant, bluer, greener patch, so small, was Harewood Forest. The trees diminished into blue dots, near Winchester. The little white changing spot he watched; creeping; creeping; for so long hidden away; then out again like an ant in the grass; that was the steam from a liner-express, "trailing clouds of glory," flying from Southampton to old Basingstoke and on upon its distant journey.

Full of thought, often remaining motionless for minutes, at length Kirk unawares fell asleep.

The wondrous nights had drawn him out and he had come in late evening after evening from musings in the water-meadows or roamings on the lonely heaths.

When he awoke it was late afternoon, and the sun had richly browned his face and hands.

Very faintly the sweet laughter of young girls rose up to him from the old prosperous house far below, a south-country farm, standing close under Junipen, at the edge of the illimitable open sea of English fields and downs.

Overshadowing beeches had gathered protectingly round the homestead. Looking far down, as he lay, Kirk caught a bright glimpse of a young girl in pale blue, and hatless. She had danced across the lawn. The air was very clear, his eyes were perfect.

Always in reverie he had been filled by lovely dreams in which no sound of a young girl's voice had ever consciously

thrilled and echoed. No voice of woman's love had ever trembled the air, the silent peace, the sunlight, the enchanted secret glades of his soul. But on this late and golden afternoon—this delicious laughter, silvery and rare, seemed to pierce his heart. It made him unaccountably, inexpressibly sad. A sense of grief unspeakable came to him like a premonition.

By another road, Kirk walked back the long way from Junipen to Cirenhampton. He went meditatively, through a still and lonely English country-side, under over-arching trees, in the gathering dusk.

From an old convent remote among the darkening woodlands came a far silver voice, tolling the Compline or the Angelus; a solemn pure voice from mediæval times.

Old unconquered sorrows, long lost to his consciousness, arose from the past and spread dark arms above his soul, and he walked sorrowfully through the gloaming. Those sorrows were to be re-entered. His reason could not tell him why he was so sad.

He met no one. White moths fluttered by the dewy hedges; and in the still evening air as it cooled bats issued from deserted barns, to wheel silently across the appearing stars, that hung in depths of space.

Unseen night-jars, crouching lengthwise on the level boughs, in the black and resinous gloom, uttered without ceasing their low, unearthly incantations; and in the loneliest places of the formless woods solitary nightingales poured forth their mysterious grief and rapture.

CHAPTER XIX

KIRK had given the first month of his new life almost wholly to his work. But presently, his routine established, he had more time for breathing, and when visiting a section he would first scan the work, deal with things and men, and then look upon the geological. He began systematically to take evidence, in writing and by measurements, of all strata exposed by the numerous excavations. He began to connote and theorise upon the evidence. Very soon he gave Bill a forecast of the "muck" that would be met with on the "No. 7 Line." He prophesied it would be treacherous running sand. Bill was dubious but respectful. Before the turf had been removed, Kirk had the prepared special timber "runners" all stacked ready for the bad ground. His forecast proved true; Bill had hoped that it would not.

"But," said Kirk, "don't worry yourself, Bill, for we shall strike no more of it."

Many interesting and unique antiquities had lain buried under Cirenhampton and were now brought to light; and Kirk found himself attracted keenly by the historic, as well as by the pre-historic.

Cannon-balls, sword-fragments, and other relics of the Civil War, were frequent in the topmost layer. Below this, in the persistent thicknesses of many ancient road-mendings, were found things Elizabethan; below these again were Roman tiles and pottery, spatulæ, horseshoes of bronze and iron, also large soft-headed nails whose heads were rough with fine, indented, triturated flint—a condition that greatly puzzled Kirk.

Deep below these human-made deposits came Neolithic peats and marls, charged with razor-like flint weapons, carved bones, charcoal layers and burnt flints. Deeper still, and far more archaic, were found ruder stone weapons; and of the mammoth, mighty bones that now lay in river-gravels far from the present river. At these depths Kirk found also the bones of ancestral reindeer, reindeer owned or hunted once-upon-a-time by the old race of long-headed men, before France and England were divided by twenty miles of sea.

Kirk could not resist taking up and caring for all these rare and precious relics. He began day-by-day to collect them.

Bill at first viewed Kirk's hobby with secret surprise and a puzzled good humour, but Kirk said to him—"It was by the evidence of these things and the notes and measurements I made, that I told you about the muck in No. 7." And that afternoon, Colquhoun himself sternly and gravely gave the order to every ganger:

"All rum stuff as is turned up is to be kep' for Mr. Clinton, and *mind! don't, you, let, me, ketch, you, a-letting any of them blorsted villagers a-sneaking-anything!*"—"If our young hingineer *wornts* thet stuff: let-'im-'ev-it! 'E's, mose, right." "There ain't no hentiquity clause in the specification—corze 'e and me, looked-it-up-d'yee-see?"

It was shortly after this order had become very effective that Kirk, one showery morning, saw a tall, fine, grey-haired man—wrapped somewhat artistically in a great black cloak—and gazing down upon a piece of Samian ware that lay near the edge of a trench.

This obvious aristocrat, and something more, was a Mr. Ferrars Lucy: and at this moment he looked vexed and dissatisfied. A navvy standing in the shallow trench with his shovel drew the beautiful fragment of pottery closer to himself, for he had just refused it to this stranger, who now turned away.

Kirk came and gaye the man two pence. He picked up the prize and hastened after Mr. Lucy, to whom he spoke—

“Sir, I saw that you appreciated this . . . will you accept it?”

Mr. Lucy’s quick glance shot from the pottery to Kirk’s face and remained there. He smiled, and Kirk smiled back. Soon they were deep in conversation, and went to look at several of the nearest excavations. A strong mutual attraction worked in them, and before parting Mr. Lucy, although thirty years the senior of Kirk, decided that he had found a kindred spirit.

Ferrars Lucy was an historian and archæologist of considerable note. He was a wellknown Fellow of the Antiquarian Society, was an authority upon ancient glass, and had written much on Norman times and life. He was wealthy, and lived in his own ancestral pre-Elizabethan home—Cloud Agnell, distant about one mile from Cirenhampton. The old Early-English pile was curious and beautiful, and Mr. Lucy always pointed out with perennial grief and wonder how, in 1688, a Lucy had seen fit vandalously to add a Jacobin porch! and substitute for the high secluding walls built round the gardens in Henry Eighth days—the present scalloped walls and seventeenth-century gateway.

On the Sunday but one following that first meeting in the street, Kirk, about noon, having made a careful toilet, set off on foot for Cloud Agnell.

A few days before this he had met and talked again with Mr. Lucy, and in the same evening came a pleasant note from Mrs. Lucy:—

“Cloud Agnell.

“Wednesday.

“DEAR MR. CLINTON,

“My husband has told me about you, and we shall be so pleased if you will dine with us next Sunday—that is, if it will be quite con-

venient for you—and we hope you will spend the afternoon and evening here—if you care to.

“We are only three—my husband, my daughter, and myself. We dine at one o’clock.

“Please let me know if you can come.

“Yours sincerely,

“MARGARET LUCY.”

The Sunday came as a glorious blue day of June. Every window at Cloud Agnell had stood wide open all the morning. The roses were at the full of their first sweet and vigorous flush. Long borders of white pinks scented the air like clove. From the row of elms that bounded Cloud Agnell on the east, came ripples of bright song from two happy chaffinches who sang alternately, hidden somewhere in the deep shade of noon.

In the drawing-room at midday were seated Mrs. Lucy and her daughter Beatrice. The mother was a vivacious woman of forty; she was elegantly dressed, and she looked much younger than her age. Not a single line of silver showed in her full and glossy mass of dark hair. Her brown eyes, large and beautiful, her fine eyebrows, the delicate nose and natural pink and white of her face, made her a very handsome woman; and her figure was that of a young matron of thirty.

She had been seated near the large window but a few minutes when she rose again, smiling to herself, and then walked a little aimlessly but quickly about the room, until she returned to the window. Here she lightly rested the tips of her white and pointed fingers on a Sheraton table as she stooped, to touch with her face a bowl of red and white roses.

“Delicious!” cried she, again dipping her face in the flowers and scent. Then moving only her supple neck and shoulders she glanced round at Beatrice—who sat dreamily in a small open-wood arm-chair. The girl was a virgin likeness of her mother, but with a difference. She showed a

graver face and more thoughtful brow. One pretty hand and arm hung down outside the light woodwork of the chair; the other hand held a small green-leather book,—the *Romaunt of Isolde*—in which Beatrice read, near to the end.

Mrs. Lucy looked out over the gardens, through which came the drive. Smiling, she turned and looked a second time at Beatrice—who seemed conscious of the glance, and let her book sink on the chair-arm. She raised her face and smiled back—a world of sweetness in her dark eyes.

“Mother dear? . . .”

“I believe you’re really in love with that wretched *Tristan*!”

“No, dear . . . but with *Isolde* . . .” said Beatrice, smiling inscrutably.

Mrs. Lucy considered this a second and then turned to the garden.

“I don’t see dad’s young man coming! What is the time, Beata? I hope he’s a presentable creature; father never knows how they are dressed, who they are, or anything essential—”

“Of course he is, mother, or father would not have been so taken with him—he said he was about thirty and talked most beautifully.”

The young girl put her book down, to come and stand beside her mother.

“How lovely you do look! darling . . .” said Beatrice, eyeing her mother closely and affectionately. She put her arm round her mother’s waist and clasped her a little.

“Well; I only hope I keep young like you!” She laid her head on her mother’s shoulder, and Mrs. Lucy curved her neck and kissed the fair cheek, saying, “Goodness! child, of course you will! But I was married before I was your age. . . . Oh! there he is!” cried Mrs. Lucy, and Beatrice stood up to look. They could watch him, but he could not see them.

"His clothes fit him . . . I think he's a gentleman," said the mother.

"A straw hat becomes him!—why, mum! he's quite young!"

"Run, Beata-love, and try and find father!"

Kirk was now passing the window at a little distance and his sunburnt face was quite nearly observable. Beatrice took another peep and then lightly left the room.

Though they were of a far more impressionable, delicate, and conscious nature, her feelings were very like those of a young man who is knowingly about to meet an attractive-looking girl.

Kirk arrived beneath the Jacobin porch and was about to ring when the oaken door opened slowly from inside and he was bowed in solemnly by William, an old servitor in black livery.

Kirk found himself in a cool ancient hall, lit by a large stained-glass window. Around the walls glittered old Genoese and Saracenic armour, and coloured light was reflected from many polished battle-axes, pikes and swords. As Kirk opened his card-case he heard steps, and William said, "Mr. Lucy and Miss Beatrice, Sir."

Mr. Lucy came forward quickly, smiling and putting forward both hands—

"I'm delighted you've come! This is my daughter, Beatrice—Miss Lucy—Mr. Clinton."

Kirk looked in her eyes, and then bowed. Beatrice went with them to the drawing room—thinking to herself, "I like him, I like him not: I like him much, I like him not a bit—*what* is it in him?" Mrs. Lucy was speaking—

"I suppose you find Cirenhampton a very quiet place, Mr. Clinton? But Beatrice and I love the country."

"But so do I! Why! I loathe cities, Mrs. Lucy, and I am newly and deeply in love with the South," said Kirk, smiling and looking down.

"But you do like London, mother," said Beatrice, mischievously.

"Of course, dear, but I'm always glad to find myself back in the pure air. We spend all our days out of doors, Mr. Clinton, don't we, Beata? We garden, and sew, and do accounts, and pick the heads and tails off gooseberries and black currants for cook, and read, and what not, mostly in that old summer house over there"—Mrs. Lucy pointed to it. "Cook's very good but in the kitchen they always leave half the heads and tails on! and my husband is so particular! Men are so faddy over food—when they happen to notice what they are eating!"

"Really, dear!" interjected Mr. Lucy, laughing.

"You read a great deal, Mr. Clinton? My husband said he thought you were a great reader. Have you read Hardy's latest? 'A Laodicean'? Beata and I don't like it as well as the 'Woodlanders.'"

"I'm afraid I haven't read them,—it seems a waste, for me, to read novels, when there are so many great books—classics—more than one can hope to read even in a lifetime . . ."

"But all young men should read novels! They are such an education," said Mrs. Lucy.

"Well . . ." said Kirk, smiling—"I have read nearly every one of the poets, and surely they cannot be surpassed?"

Beatrice laughed gently, glanced from her mother to Kirk and said—

"They write of the ideal, do they not, Mr. Clinton? But Hardy writes of the real—of real men and real women; mother and I read every one."

"I did try one, I remember, but it had split infinitives in it, I think it had, and was entirely about ever so much delay and worry and trouble over some one who had fallen in love with some girl; and the split infinitives—I *think* they were in that book—so astonished me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" heartily laughed Mr. Lucy at his women-

folk—and then at Kirk—while Beatrice blushed slightly—“You are subtle! You are subtle, Clinton!—Pretends he knows nothing of these things! Don’t you see he’s cleverly ironical?”

It was now Kirk who blushed as he spoke—

“I am sorry . . . but I spoke quite sincerely . . . I cannot understand it . . . fully. It seems to interfere so much, all that, with great and real things.”

“Well! Well!” laughed Mr. Lucy, and his wife archly asked Kirk,

“Then you are a woman-hater?”

“Me! No! No indeed! Why should you think that, Mrs. Lucy? . . . I think they are heavenly, so infinitely different from men, . . . they are like Nature . . . especially the young girls. . . . Why! they are like the pure and sweet flowers!”

“And if plucked they wither?” cried Mr. Lucy.

“. . . I have not thought all about them yet, but they are delightful to watch—all good women are.”

“Mr. Clinton!” said Mrs. Lucy, “my prescription for *you* is an immediate thorough course of Hardy and Meredith!”

Thought Beatrice to herself—“He’s a nice fellow—I like him—a quite uncommon, clever boy—but far too wrapped up in himself and his thoughts—even now he is, this minute.”

“. . . You see, I come from the Midlands,” said Kirk, speaking impersonally—“and all there . . . all the scenery, is more meditative . . . less joyous and young than here—that is what I feel; here one is further from iron: that, I think, must be the geological reason.”

At this moment a bell rang, and Mrs. Lucy stood up briskly, exclaiming—

“Dinner! I hope you are hungry, Mr. Clinton? All young folk should be!”

“I’ll do my best!” said Kirk, cheerfully.

“That’s right! Come along, all of you—we’ve a salmon from Romsey, killed by a doting friend of Beatrice’s.”

"He's not *my* friend altogether!" cried Beatrice, laughing and blushing, "he's more mother's than mine."

Mr. Lucy, standing, said grace, and as he seated himself Kirk asked,

"Do you remember the Scottish Grace?"

"No, what was it?"

"If the meenister had dined well with a member of the kirk, he said,

"'Oh Lord! for all Thy good and manifold blessings vouchsafed to us this day, we *deeply* thank Thee'; but if the dinner was a poor one, he said—

"'Oh Lord! even for *these*, even the verra *least* of Thy merrcies, we give Thee thanks.'"

Mr. Lucy, laughing, asked Kirk—

"Are you a Presbyterian?"

"No."

"What then? Church of England, of course?"

"I like it best," said Kirk, somewhat indifferently, and Beatrice asked him—

"But don't you attend Church, Mr. Clinton?"

"Well—Miss Lucy—I go every Sunday to hear Dr. Greenfield preach."

"Oh? Who is he?"

"Silly!" laughed her mother. "Mr. Clinton means he goes for a walk!"

"I take a book with me—or I paint wild flowers—or just sit and think, if it is too hot and lovely."

"So you paint?" exclaimed Mrs. Lucy, greatly interested. "Well, I began with water colours three years ago!—just to keep Beata company!"

"That reminds me of something," said Kirk. "A man who paints seascapes told me that Moore never touched canvas until he was fifty-five,—and Moore made a name—and he began a full twenty years later than you have done, Mrs. Lucy."

"Quite sure?" quizzed Mr. Lucy, laughing.

"Positive," replied Kirk, glancing admiringly at Mrs. Lucy.

"Well!" cried she. "If you will show us yours, we will show you ours!"

"I will with pleasure. . . . But mine are only queer little things—still, I'll bring them so I may see yours. Painting attracts me very much."

"Those are some of mother's, those on each side the fireplace," said Beatrice. "Her trees worry her dreadfully; she will never touch them while I watch her."

"And Beata can only do old houses and gardens!"

"Yes, we always sit back to back; but remember, Mr. Clinton, you have promised to bring your own sketches!"

"Oh! all right, but they are very small and rather queer, and it takes me at least six hours to do one wee one."

"Why! that's like me!" cried Beatrice. "But mum secretes all my biggest brushes, and simply flops away with them at ever such a rate!—half her time she waits for the paper to dry!"

Cloud Agnell held a rich treasury of antique art, enlivened by many beautiful water colours, big and little, painted by the mother and the daughter. In this ancient house Kirk soon felt deeply at home, soothed, and in his natural environment. He spent all the afternoon with Mr. Lucy—detailing to him, and sketching for him, the strata of Cirenhampton and their contents. His host was delightful, such was the knowledge he possessed, so interestingly did he converse, and so winning were his manners. Mrs. Lucy in the drawing-room after tea, and despite her husband's silent dissent, gave Kirk a full and most amusing description of Cirenhampton society, and, after supper, Beatrice played the violin very sweetly and truly, while her mother gave a delicate accompaniment. Their music was of a high order, and ravished the soul of Kirk. He accepted gratefully an invitation to

return next Sunday, and he walked home late at night, in a charmed state of body, soul, and spirit.

Kirk and Mr. Lucy had talked over the question of the splendid finds daily turned up in Cirenhampton. There was no museum, but Kirk said that if a museum were started he certainly would give all his collection to it; and if such a movement came to nothing, then he and Mr. Lucy would make a division of spoils, the scientific and prehistoric to Kirk, and the antiquities to Mr. Lucy—barring a few precious things that Kirk desired to keep: among them a girl's open-work Elizabethan shoes, a great demi-culverin ball, a fragment of gilded Norman chain-mail, and two skulls of Saxon origin, deeply sword-smitten, that brought forgotten memories of—

“Old unhappy far-off things,
And battles long ago.”

Next Sunday, Kirk found two other guests at the Lucys'. The one, an iron-grey colonel home from India, who gave attention solely to Beatrice and Mrs. Lucy; the other, an old man, with a splendid brow, an open noble face, a great shock of snow-white hair, a white clipped beard, and the bright sparkling eyes and animation of a young man. This was Professor Rally, F.R.S., F.G.I., F.S.A., etc. He had been born at Cirenhampton, and was a very old friend of the Lucys. He now lived in London, where he had charge of a government museum. From Mr. Lucy he had heard dilatorily about the excavations, and at once had hastened down, eager for research, and with an eye to additions for his own museum.

He was a man generous, honourable, unselfish, intuitive, and he was one markedly distinguished in scientific circles. Kirk knew the latter fact, but he knew not his character. The desire for retribution against the Reverend Blenk, though neglected, still smouldered on. He was preparing that revenge

at leisure, and in his own way. Kirk's host had written to Professor Rally, telling him of Kirk, and, somehow, he hoped great things from their meeting. He had been much taken by Kirk's wide reading, by his idealism, his appreciation of beauty of nature, and of Ancient Art; and especially was he impressed by the peculiar union of these with so obvious an aptitude for civil engineering.

The Professor—on being introduced—at once opened a fire of questions upon Kirk, mentioning that Lucy had told him of the admirable records, the organised collection of *materia*, the excellent water-colour sections, that Kirk had made.

But to Mr. Lucy's extreme secret surprise Kirk merely bowed, smiled, seemed quite dull and indifferent, and evaded every question with subtle replies that constantly led away to other things and other places.

Professor Rally suddenly dropped his subject, and was silent a few minutes; and then he and Lucy mutually recounted great archæological days they had spent together, recalling funny things—the wonderful Roman coin brought to them, green with centuries, and bearing the impress "150 B. C.," and Kirk listened eagerly, and laughed with the two elders.

The following Sunday again found Kirk at Cloud Agnell; and, after early cups of tea, Beatrice with Kirk and her father walked out along a hedge-path. This led through deeply undulating country-side—full of scents of honeysuckle—and through richly nourished fields of rising corn, and so onwards to a winding grass-lane.

In this they walked between immense hedges, that now were covered by the wild June roses—pale and widely open in the shade and delicately flushed in the hot and slanting sunbeams.

Mr. Lucy and the two young people stopped a few moments beneath a noble line of elms. From these, great shadows lay out over a sloping field of vivid yellow charlock,

and across a pure crimson spread of dark trifolium. Kirk was quite moved, for he had not before seen this, the most beautiful, the most striking of all flowering fields—crimson trifolium in mass—for, as he said to them, “It is a dark flawless ruby, worn only on the lovely breast of this beloved South.”

The trio walked on, and presently arrived at a small grey-green church set quite by itself upon the verge of a wild upland heath.

Mr. Lucy, some years before, while poring in Norman manuscript and searching for quite other information, had read of mural paintings in this church done by one Fra Belesme.

Three years ago, now, upon a certain ardent afternoon, Mr. Lucy and the incumbent, both archæologists, removed the back from a seventeenth-century chancel stall and carefully flaked off a little plaster, and then some more, and lo! a disclosure of painting—the sienna-hued lines of a sandalled foot. Later, by skilled men the plaster was all removed. Figures of saints and angels were now seen to cover the whole of the chancel walls. Mr. Lucy had brought Kirk to see this triumph of research. Kirk sat by Beatrice in the cool, very ancient place of worship, and looked at the Norman faces on the walls, and he thought of Beatrice’s face, and of her father’s: there was a likeness undeniable, and he knew the Lucys had descended in unbroken line right from those days, over seven hundred years ago.

“It must be good to know so much of one’s ancestry”—thought he—“it must explain so much of one’s self, to one’s self.” He looked out through a leaded, clear-glass but mediæval window, and thought back into the past, and wondered how his old landscape had looked seven hundred years before this evening. But at this moment the pretty Beatrice smiling discreetly whispered something to him—

“I forgot to warn you! the old clerk reads the lessons, he’s rather peculiar!”

This old functionary now approached the lectern; his face was remarkably sour, and he began to read very deliberately, with a continual accent of aggression and surprise:—

“In the third reign, of 'ard-word, King of Judah, came 'ard-word King of Babylon, into Jeehoorusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord, gave 'ard-word, King of Judah, into 'is 'and—”

But it was Beatrice who first gave way to a nervous irresistible desire to laugh, and when Kirk during prayers found her shaking silently beside him, he laughingly whispered, “This is too unkind of you! I shall have to go out!”—and poor Beatrice was again seized, though in terror of the end of the prayer, and aware that her father, though indulgent, was quite used to this strange “'ardwordness”—and was already a little vexed at her behaviour, which she now felt powerless to control. Indeed it had reached that painful and very infectious state of nervous tittering, known to most young folk at some time or another in a serious or public place.

During the hymn Kirk and Beatrice shared the same book, and Kirk said, “At the end of this verse we go straight out through that side-door; you follow me.”

Beatrice obeyed him, and they left the church quietly, but blushing, and feeling every eye was upon them. They went along the flint gravel path that crunched too loudly, but quickly they passed over and below the heath, and they drew free breath. The inclination to laugh had passed, and between them Kirk felt an unexpected shyness. They loitered slowly along beneath the arching lane. Beatrice seemed to avoid his occasional glance. She began to gather wild flowers, stooping gracefully to take small fox-gloves and a few tall white champions. He stood behind her, and she spoke,

“We're so glad . . . Mater and I . . . that you and father like each other . . .”

“Are you? Why? I didn't know that. . . . I am so glad!”

Beatrice arranging the flowers turned to him and spoke diffidently, though knowing that he would understand—

"He used to get so bored, you see. We cannot really talk to him intelligently about fossils and old things, and he isn't as musical as you are. He so wanted a companion in his hobbies, some one clever, and mother and I knew that, although *he* didn't, I think; being by himself so much, with two women. He has so few friends, and those all at a distance—of course we *know* plenty of people. . . ."

Kirk felt pleased and touched, but sorry, for his mind flashed on to the end of the works and his departure, and he replied to her:

"But you are dearer to him than any fossil."

"Ah yes," said Beatrice smiling sweetly—"I know, in that way . . . but would *you* be happy if you had only women companions?" As she spoke she was again bending among the pink willow herb.

" . . . I think that I should; I've always imagined that my greatest friend will be a girl. The only ones, real friends I've felt affection for are—one, no: two women and two girls."

"Two girls!"

"Why, you see, one was mother, one is my great aunt, one's my sister, and the other is a girl I knew for a time until I was sixteen."

"Oh! . . . What was she like?"

"She was very gentle, and made you feel so calm and at peace; and I remember I told her all kinds of things I thought about at that time."

"How old was she?"

"Older than I was: about as old as you are now."

"How old am I?" asked she.

Kirk laughed and Beatrice turned and smiled at him with some hidden thought, while he regarded her.

"Eighteen?"

"No, I'm nineteen. . . . Was *her* hair dark?"

"No, quite fair, very pale brown, and grey eyes."

"Do you like dark hair best?"

"You do, of course!"—Kirk was smiling and Beatrice, surprised at his sally, had laughed and coloured a little.

"She was not as . . . well!—as pretty, and enchanting, as you are, Miss Lucy."

"Oh! thank you!"

Again, he could not see her face.

"I had no idea you even noticed us poor things!" said she.

"Why! What a humbug! . . . you must know that I deeply like women, and you, and your mother."

She glanced sideways and saw his reddened cheek.

"Yes . . . I was only funning—Shall we go back and meet father?"

"I do like dark hair best, and dark eyes, they've more emotion, dark men and women—except when they've steely eyes—like me."

"They're not steely, are they? Aren't they dark! May I look?"

They laughed, feeling a delicious confidence of some kind—and Beatrice looked into Kirk's clear-cut eyes—and instantly looked away.

"Yes . . . I fancied your eyes were dark, they're grey now, but at night they go nearly black."

"Simply marvellous!" whimsically cried Kirk, making her laugh again, and then Mr. Lucy joined them, and said they were quite disgraceful, while Beatrice danced along on his arm in a sudden mood of gaiety.

"How acutely clever of you, dad, to race the congregation!—in another moment we should have set off home, I never could have faced them again!"

CHAPTER XX

A FEW days later Kirk was surprised and touched by a letter he received from Professor Rally:—

“DEAR MR. CLINTON,

“My old friend Lucy has written and told me all about your disappointment over your discoveries. It never occurred to me that you were the ‘*Clintoniensis*’ of those valuable *novo species*. I understand, I am sure, your wounded feelings; but do not, my dear fellow, allow yourself to judge all by the shortcomings of one. I suffered a very similar wrong in my own youth, and the best thing is to dismiss it from your mind and go on to fresh conquests—which I feel sure you have before you in the good work Lucy told me you are doing at Cirenhampton—and I should so like to have seen those water-colour sketches he spoke of, also the palæoliths.

“With the certificates you hold, and the fact of your remarkable work in those barren strata (known, I find, to far more of us than you imagine), you are quite eligible to become a Fellow of the G.I., and it will give me great pleasure to propose you myself, and I will find a good seconder; and you can then read your own papers.

“Meanwhile, I shall be glad to help you in every way, and I can, I think, obtain for you the temporary use of the library. You should give every reference to previous authors who touch on Cirenhampton geology, and, also, you must quote verse and chapter from all authorities whom you mention. The matter put forward must be new, it must be genuine research, and the English should be good; otherwise work is not passed by the referees. In many ways I can help you; for example, by reading your proofs. I strongly advise you to obtain and study Meiklejohn’s little book on English.”

“But should you prefer to keep all to yourself until you have finished your paper, why, then, so let it be: and I shall see and appreciate your work in good time: and you will come to know me.

“I would very much like to borrow the remarkable book of verse by Stoddart that you showed me; I find it, as I feared, quite out of print, but my daughter has offered to copy it all out for me. My

memory is still so good, and I was so impressed, that I was able to quote to her the whole of the first poem.

“Believe me, dear Mr. Clinton,

“Yours sincerely,

“T. A. RALLY.”

Clinton wrote a warm letter in reply, gratefully accepting the proffered help.

Fellowship of the Geological Institute would cost him seven guineas. At present he could not afford this. He had just spent nearly that sum upon evening dress. His old suit had once belonged to Ted, and was become out of date and worn. He therefore wrote that he would prefer to wait a few months, and if by that time he had finished the Cirenhampton monograph, it would be a good help towards election.

When Rally next came down, he and Kirk and Mr. Lucy spent the whole afternoon from two until six-thirty in delightful investigation, theory, and discussion. Upon a large-scale map, Kirk showed the lines of the curious submerged gravel-barriers that he had by now partly traced out and proved. He theorised that they were old storm-beaches; he showed to the Professor type specimens of battered flints. In the lagoons gradually formed behind these barriers—suggested Kirk—had been laid down the freshwater marls, peats and clays. The Neolithic men had for protection built and lived on rude timber crannogs in the shallow waters. Carcasses of many kinds of deer and of an extinct horse now and then had been brought down by floods into the lagoon, and there had sunk their bones, and thus one found bones of land animals in this fresh-water marl. At times, the sea would break in, a barrier be breached, and thus one had an explanation of certain curious “washouts,” and those puzzling local mixtures of sequence. Also, what of the effects of stranded ice, or of river ice? The Neolithic fauna certainly showed a cold climate. Archæological questions also arose, and Lucy frequently took his turn in the conversation.

At twenty to seven Mrs. Lucy followed by Beatrice came into the study.

"Mr. Clinton! We've come to your rescue! Of course you three old dreamers never heard the first bell? It's now nearly seven!"

"Ah! Mrs. Lucy!" laughed Kirk, "and it was so simple to bring us, you had but to strike one chord, and she to draw her bow twice—and we would have come to you!"

"Oh! Flatterer!! this is Mr. Clinton in a new light—Oh!! and *what* is this horrible black mess in my lovely Worcester?"

"That, dear lady," laughed Rally—taking up the bowl—"is a little pure washed peat, quite clean and harmless, and let me tell you it contains no less than fourteen coldly-temperate flora of Neolithic times."

"Aren't they ogres, dear? Devoting themselves to all these poor old ugly dead things? I call it simply living in the past! Morbid! I haven't forgotten Professor What's-his-name, the Egypt man, he's grown just like a *mummy*, exactly like one of those graven images, and your father, dear, I declare already looks most *Gothic*! The Professor is the Old Astrologer and Mr. Clinton is going to be a sort of dreamy scientific Galahad!"

"And what better! what better could he be, Madame?" said Rally, darting at her a bright merry glance from beneath his shaggy brows.

"What better? Why, a young human being, of course, living for men and things!"

"And women?" interjected Lucy, laughing.

"And women!" cried his wife, curtseying disdainfully. "What is there better?"

"*Young* women!" declared old Rally, laughing at Beatrice.

"Dad, darling," said she, releasing herself from her father's arm. "You three boys are to go and dress, *at once*. Come along, mother."

Kirk began to collect the maps and papers. Lucy was

replacing books of reference. It flashed through Rally's mind as an unimportant thought while he tenderly handled precious flints that Kirk and Beatrice might make a match of it. . . . "But in about five years, when he's thirty." He thought of Kirk's election, and asked him,

"And how old are you, Clinton?"

"Nearly twenty-one."

"Not twenty-one? dear me! Lucy! he's not twenty-one!"

Then continuing later in a low voice, he had said aside to Kirk, "Look after all that our friend finds; record and label all, in your clear handwriting; he is so learned, but he has no marked gift of *order*, you see."

But the strong internal desires in Kirk—for just law, for harmony, for permanence and fixity, for ideals—set a limit to experience, made him over-rebellious of seeming injustice, and were to be a cause of sorrow.

Sometimes fell a distant shadow in his bright sky; a sudden feeling of irreparable grief, when, in moments of reverie, he realised the eternal decay of all beauty, the death of flowers, the inevitable separation for ever of all who love, of lovers; and especially at such times was he grieved and deeply moved by the virginal form and being, the beauty so exquisite, fresh and tender, of young girls. All that highest individual loveliness, irretrievably passed away, changed to something else, and for ever died.

It was to some extent the alleviation of these feelings that gave him interest in a curious book he bought at second-hand—"The Science of Finite and Infinite Life." At that time but few in England were conversant with theories of re-incarnation. Kirk saw how heavenly an explanation of mysteries that might be, if it were true; if it were but true . . .

He saw his dear flowers come up year by year but they were not those of the last year. The flowers were only racially eternal, and even racially, century by century, they changed and changed for ever. It seemed so clearly similar

with mankind. The *individual* in all things living, the only, the dear, the specially desired loved-one, perished. This deep irreparable grief underlay ideal human love; because it was so fleeting, so finite, so sad, yet so great.

Knowing little or nought of woman, unconscious of mutual sex-attraction, he viewed that great mystery in a manner both much older and much younger than his years. To him, all that should take place between man and woman lay either in a pure mental-spiritual friendship, or in perfect wedlock. Every other relation between a man and girl was palpably futile, wasteful, despicably dilettante, or deeply evil and cruel to the girl.

Kirk was hard-worked but so active both of mind and body that he found time for much beside his daily work. He had long nursed an idea that some day, by some means, no longer would he be an engineer. Some day, he would be either a geologist, or a man of letters. But he had not commenced to work with fixity and definite foresight towards his purpose. Instead, he was drawn irresistibly by his youth into the minglings of sport, pure science, poetry, writings, beauty and nature worship, that encompassed and allured him. He was but twenty and the next five years—that long bright vista—would give time enough and plenty for him to pass examinations and obtain diplomas. Besides, civil engineering came so easy to himself, it was mere child's play! thought he, and he could win diplomas when he liked. His firm and easy grip of Cirenhampton engineering work, his obvious success, gave him confidence and a quiet enjoyment of his young manhood and command. He enjoyed greatly his new found liberty and independence, after the long subjection to his father. The present was entrancing, full, vivifying. He was living in this southern beauteous and romantic countryside; such wonderful geology and pre-histology absorbed him. Daily unfettered converse with the finest books enlarged his mind, and he felt a noble pride of intellect,

the joy-in-growth of a strong sapling in the Spring. Nature, ever new and radiant, brought him ever fresh and lovelier thought, a deeper ecstasy; he seemed to know and share even the passionate emotions of aspiring flowers.

Except at times with the Lucys, Kirk no longer went to Church. The ceremonial and the words seemed to him strange and ever more strange. In congregations he felt he was alone. He was but the foreign looker-on at devotions in which he no longer had part or place.

When by power of imagination he passed easily into distant space, and from there consciously looked down upon the earth—one side all in golden light—a great ball revolving through the black invisible on her eternal journey—then somewhere on that ball, knew he, was the speck in which his own body existed at that moment; and in that church—that speck of artificial shelter—were the tiny human beings, engaged in those most curious, sad, very extraordinary, and minute complexities of their microscopic lives. “They live in a profound dream,” thought he—“a close, rapt dream; an ancient, beautiful, but tiny consciousness; one that extended never beyond the outer clinging film of planetary air, and rarely to that!”

CHAPTER XXI

THEN at times powerfully occupying Kirk there were those lowlier enjoyments, those that satisfied the tremendous instinct for the chase. That satisfied that desire potential, often long-buried, yet living on, and very present to-day, strong in flesh, bone, and brain, of almost every dog and man, from times remote, from countless vanished generations of the pre-historic, to the living day.

Kirk in boyhood had seen a stout rheumatic labourer at sight of bent rod and vicious plunge throw down his axe and run, clamber and fall over a stiff fence, pick himself up and run again panting like a dog,—for what? To see the chase! be in it! handle the net! be in at the death!—of something the size of a mackerel! living in a little lake!

For hundreds of thousands of years the forebears of the present human race lived by hunting, fishing, killing, ensnaring in the wilds. The skill instinctive, the desire, lived on in Kirk, as in most.

Trouting was held in high honour by all native folk at Cirenhampton. There the Piscatorial Society had waters. A single mile of fishing often let for three hundred a year. The Cirenhampton Club, first embodied in the times of Izaak Walton, possessed old-time privileges. The modern members were land-owners, farmers, and well-to-do merchants and townsmen of Cirenhampton. Lord Laymead was President. Mr. Bumper, the fat and jovial miller, with whom Kirk dealt amicably when river crossings were in hand, was Vice-President of the Club. Mr. Bumper it was who introduced Kirk. Despite his floury work-a-day clothes, he was a fairly educated man and brother to Bumper M.I.C.E.,

F.R.S., the eminent mathematician, now Professor in a well-known chair.

"Fred has all the brains but I've got all the money!—He! He! He! He!" laughed Mr. Bumper, digging Kirk in the ribs. He had the merits of a good citizen, he ran the water down well in advance for each operation, charged a very low compensation for each stoppage of his flour mill, had for nothing lent Kirk a barge, and did all he could to help forward the public work of his own town. Standing above his great weir he one day asked Kirk if he were not a fisherman, and told him tales of mighty trout. He took Kirk that evening to the Club.

This for a century had been housed in a large and quaint old timber-ceiled room, part of an historic inn. The low leaded windows were continuous all along one side, and looked out upon a garden. At one end of the room was a little bar. Upon a massive side-table stood a pair of antique scales; one side bore the weights, the other held a long, curious, and polished copper pan. Beside these lay a worn book of records. Inside the cavernous fireplace stood a big bouquet of wild flowers. The large and easy chairs and half a dozen little three-legged tables all looked as though in daily use. The monster trout, perch, grayling, and pike that filled the many cases on the walls, the library of sporting books, the entry of a youngish member with a creel of trout, the lowness of subscription for temporary members—all decided Kirk; and he was that evening made an associate. The Club, Kirk soon found, was rather like that of the Tarascon Alpinists.

Upon the next Whit-Monday, his old rod in hand, weather-beaten basket on back, Kirk walked beside the fine but very difficult piece of club water. The deep and narrow chalk-river here wound and swirled along at a speed quite unsuspected, for the valley sides were far apart, and miles of flat fen-land lay between them. Acres of reddish tufted reeds, immense withy-beds, miles of rushes that concealed old water-dykes and carriers, made the valley almost pathless. Often

one came on openings of vivid green, where the rich and starry moss spread smoothly and invitingly above dangerous semi-liquid peat. The river banks were treacherous, very low, soft and much caved; they came up vertically out of deep water. Great twenty-yard tresses of clear-water weeds everywhere swung gracefully and often swiftly, and left but few spaces where one might cast a fly, or bring safely to bank a heavy trout. The fish ran very large, and, under club-rules, trout of less than one-and-a-quarter pounds if taken were to be returned. Only normal flies were permitted. The "Alexandra," the spinning-bait, the worm, were debarred absolutely, and to use them would forfeit membership. The rules were truly sporting, the water strictly cared-for. Presently Kirk saw advancing leisurely a large party of the club-men, each in Harris tweed, each armed, belted, strapped across and hung about with quantities of kit. A dozen shiny rods wagged overhead. All caps and hats were rough and fuzzy with the multitude of artificial flies stuck in them.

These fishers sounded very merry. The water-bailiff with an assistant brought up the rear, carrying between them a most monstrous hamper. The Vice-President, shaking with laughter, led the procession.

"Well, Mr. Bumper!" laughed Kirk, caught by the mirth, "You *do* all look the part! Had any luck?"

"*Rather!* ! Young Brown's hooked his own dog! ! he! he! took him in his bit of tail! just seen 'em right out o' sight! he! he! he! ha! ha! ha-ha! ! dog yelling! Brown going like a four-year-old! Tom's bull-dog after *him*! View hallo! God bless me! . . . God bless me! . . . nearly killed us all! I shall put it in the minutes of the Club, he! he! he! he! he! God bless my soul! Well! well! . . . Gentlemen! if the fish won't feed, we will, Mr. Clinton! not a soul's killed a fish! He! he! he! he! scooting dog yelling, Brown yelling, and jumping bull-dog jumping at his jumping bag! Stuff falling off him, bully shakes 'em and off again for Brown! He! he! joke of a lifetime!"

It was but eleven-thirty, but they had the basket set down then and there. They insisted on "our young new member," "the destroyer of our peaceable roads and countryside," likewise sitting down amid the quick pop of corks, the gurgling of abundant bottles, the clatter of the knives and forks of good trencher men: and when Kirk, oddly accelerated by his first champagne, burst into sharp unexpected wit and joke with Mr. Bumper, and all laughed uproariously, he felt a novel, very warm sensation of humanity and unity, that lasted many hours. Luncheon finished, they were scrupulous that no unsightly paper, cork, or smallest remnant remained to sully the flowery margin of the pure river. "*In vino veritas*" laughed the big and Jupiterian man, as all said farewell to Kirk. "Blest if I didn't think him the gravest boy I'd ever met! But not *now!* not *now!*"

For three evenings Kirk was unsuccessful. He hooked and lost two fish. Plain it was there was much to learn, before one could take these cunning fellows from their intricate jungles in the eddying convolving water. For the stream was shadowed in the deeps, and slowly traversed back and forth, by incredible lengths of living floating weed—deep rooted, and combed from root to tip by deep and fast current. Even one dropper and the tail-fly was, Kirk found, too risky, and next he used but a single fly. He lurked stealthily, watched the dim shapes of big trout, drew conclusions, and made experiments. On two calm evenings from behind a little bush he knelt and cast his very gentlest right to the further side, above a fine fellow who inhabited beneath an old hawthorn. Rise after rise could Kirk see, just a foot below a rich tress of May-blossom that nearly swept the water. He quietly moved away, changed his fly, came back later, and tried again. He came a third evening: the first tinge of brown was on the May-blossom, a wind slight and warm rippled the surface now and then against the stream. Kirk put on a large moth, held his rod far back and crept behind the little bush. The filmy gut floated out and straightened perfectly, his moth

alighted like the living thing, and by the swift current was swept beneath the bough. The fish rose, Kirk struck, the moth whirled back. "Too soon! too soon!" thought Kirk, his heart beating. He waited a full minute; then cast again perfect as before—but just within a moment's lull of wind—and the moth alighted on the bough and stopped there. With raised rod to free the fly, Kirk sent a coiling undulation, down dropped the moth—Whallop! ! ! fast in a good 'un! ! *Down-stream, down-stream* Kirk forced the fish! Each time he bolted up Kirk bolted faster on the very edge. The pull upstream reversed the fish—made him dash down stream—thus he rushed and slid safely through the long open fingers of the swaying weed until far below the rise, and come to freer water. There he leaped twice, came up, turned a gleaming flank, bored deeply at Kirk's very feet, dashed out again, made a half leap, then suddenly gave up the fight. Trembling with delight, Kirk immersed the landing-net, stood motionless, and, ready for a sudden plunge, he quietly drew the heavy fish to bank, adroitly raised the net, and next moment gazed admiringly upon the bright red spots, the rich bronze and silver of a splendid fish, a full two-and-a-half pounder.

Having learnt his water, Kirk seldom went fishing but he brought back a big trout or two. One he gave to Bill, one to Charlie, some to the Lucys. They were good to eat as salmon; pink, flaky, and delicious. Kirk took his largest fish by means of a "moth" that never was on land or sea.

"I will try something absolutely out of the ordinary," laughed he to himself one wet evening, and he dressed a medium hook on fairly strong gut, with a whole handful of white hen feathers. From a good knot full three inches above the hook, he worked downwards, and formed the monster wings and hackles, laid a wondrous triple tail, and, using half a ball of soft white darning-wool, he wound on a flexible body like a little bolster. Just where the tail forked from this body, there was the wicked little hook!

Kirk held up the finished apparition. He thought of his father's classic notions, and chuckled. "Well! they can't miss *this* at dusk: and for pike, the bigger the bait the bigger the fish! Bickerdyke and Jardine proved that. And why not likewise for trout?"

The next evening when dusk came down, he put on a well-stained cast of salmon-gut, he looped on the new idea, and waved his long rod. Instantly two big bats pounced and whirled about him following the apparition till it took the black water. Away it swept, down, across, then again Kirk put it in the air and down shot the bats! Again the monster moth whirled away and then alighted. Kirk could see it carried down stream to the limit of the line. As he drew it quickly up stream towards himself came a ferocious rush he was unprepared for. "It's a beastly pike!" ejaculated he—and out again sailed the lump of wool and feather, and daintily alighted. Instantly a great rush—half a second pause—and whew!!! the tip of the tall rod wrenched to the very water! Kirk instantly recovered. Fifteen minutes later, and three hundred yards down stream, he safely grassed a big trout.

Too large was this fish for his old creel, so Kirk spread some dewy grass and flowers in a serviette that had contained some cake, and knotting it, carried the fish straightway to the Club. There he found Mr. Bumper and half a dozen members.

"By Jove! A very large fish! indeed! a grand fish! and in perfect condition," said Mr. Bumper, as he laid it ceremoniously in the scales—all crowding round him. "Four pounds and five ounces, no less!" . . . "Nineteen inches from eye to fork! . . . fourteen inches girth . . . the largest of the season; a great fish, Mr. Clinton; what fly did you kill him on?"

"Here it is," said Kirk modestly producing it—and forthwith sent Mr. Bumper and his friends into fits of laughter.

"Caught it with a live chicken! he! he! he! That's what

he's done, gentlemen! he! he! he! *Dragged* for it, with half a hen! God bless my soul, these engineers! Just like my brother! found him on our water with a damned thing he *wound up*! he! he! he! Have to pass a new rule! No member shall use sparrows, cocks and hens, clock-springs, bantams! he! he! he! . . . Well, Mr. Clinton, you've taught us something new, you have. What the devil do you call it? 'The Flying Hen'? he! he! he! ha! ha-ha!!"

Kirk wished to preserve this fish, and, late as it was, he took it to the local man. The taxidermist told him he could not set up so large a fish for less than about forty shillings. That would be the lowest price—say, two pounds-ten with the case. This was more than Kirk cared to spend. Besides, he had thought of sending the fish to Mrs. Athorpe, and he now decided he would do so.

Very few members fished habitually, and when they did they preferred the forenoon. On Sundays fishing was not permitted; it was a day of peace for trout and man. So Kirk seldom met a brother sportsman, for his leisure was at evening.

The swarming bird-life, the myriad flowers, the coming sunset, the sweet solitude, often bade Kirk lay aside his rod, to sit and dream, undisturbed and isolated, surrounded by the beauty and the labyrinth of fen and of golden quashy water-mead, by acres and acres of trackless reed and flag and iris, by distant spaces pink with ragged robin, yellow with the water-ragwort, blue with mallow and forget-me-not.

The net of stream and ditch and dyke was pink with tall willow herb, purple with loosestrife, creamy with meadow-sweet, mauve with tall wild mints. Underfoot, the luscious yellow money-wort everywhere spread tresses. Filmy-winged dragon-flies hovered in scented air along the deep hidden paths, or clung, rapt, to the green sedgy blades. In May the hawthorn edged the marshlands with distant walls of blossom; and June saw a darker line—the elder-trees in

dark leaf thickly barred with level creamy flower. Beyond these rose the hanging woods, the distant curving downs.

Here—in summer—beside the river, while the sun still pours his rays, ever more mellow, more level, and more golden—the air each evening fills with sound—the ceaseless liquid twittering of swallows, passing and re-passing, the scream of the black swift, mad with joy and speed, swooping to his darting love—the snipe, coursing by himself—suddenly careers obliquely downwards, humming uncannily, then re-ascends. His mate oddly bleating sits on the rotten hatch and watches him. From every side one hears the sharp “bik! bik! bik!” of coots, the “croog!” of water-hens, the rapid rising pip! pip! pip! pip! pip!! of the shy grebes; and close at hand the restless sedge warbler chatters, stops and chatters, all the time.

But sound decreases with the fading light; bird after bird goes to rest. With dusk comes a great stillness; and then from some fastness of the marshes, rises at last a single unremitting sound; monotonous, lonely, endless;—it is the weird nocturne of that rarest bird, the grasshopper warbler. His song is not of joy, nor sorrow, and is inarticulate and yet as meaningful as those sounds that rise at night from distant falling water—when all else is still—and one senses the murmur that rises ever fainter and fainter from oblivion and the past.

Kirk, in darkness, came homeward along the river-side from one of these reveries, with basket on back and rod held gunwise beneath his arm—and in his free hand he carried a bouquet of wild flowers. His mind was peaceful and harmonious as the silent rich trees. His eyes, full of far-away imaginings, were fixed on Venus, who shone, ethereally pure and steadfast, in the darkening west.

“Clinton!”

Kirk stopped and turned as Charlie issued from a hiding place in the hedge and came close to him.

"Flowers, old chap! who the dooce are *you* after?" and Charlie laughed.

"No one," said Kirk, good-humouredly.

"Why! then you just stop with me! just the very, very thing!" cried he with suppressed gusto—"I've got two girls coming along directly. I thought it was them coming when I heard you—it's before time yet—so I hid, to jump out on them!—Those Miss Taylors, you've seen them? Jolly pretty bits! and they're all right, naughty little things! Look here, Clinton, I'll take the eldest and you take the youngest. By Jove! I don't believe you've ever had a girl?"

Charlie laughed and giggled softly to himself and hit Kirk on the back—"I'd *love* to see you with your first!! I'll never forget mine—"

"Thanks, Charlie, I don't really take the slightest interest in 'em."

"Oh! but don't be such a *fool*, Clinton." And he button-holed Kirk, who had begun to move. "Most chaps would give a fiver to be in your place to-night! I tell you they are *ripping* bits!—all the fun-o'-the-fair—*besides*, can't you *see*? It's so darned awkward with two girls to one fellow—I shall have no *end* of trouble to separate them. Go a walk with her, there's a good chap, and tell me to-morrow what happened!" And Charlie sniggered over the idea.

"Thanks, no, good night."

"Oh, damn you!"

"*What?*"

". . . Oh, go home and get your milk, you bally eunuch!"

"Take that!" fiercely replied Kirk as Charlie fell back into the hedge. He reclined movingly in it, cursing the myriad thorns, and Kirk went on. He found he had dropped the flowers, but he did not go back. He quoted Swedenborg, "O God, what penal blindness hast thou laid upon these people."

He looked for trouble from this incident, but was surprised two days later when Charlie met him with a per-

fectly good-humoured broad smile and laugh, and Kirk also smiled.

“How dy’ye do, Clinton! I’d no call to say that to you—but I was so damned disappointed at the moment. However, my son, it was *all* right. Miss Number One was far too fly for her little sister and got there first! and *my!*” laughed Charlie, with gestures—“Isn’t she a giddy little canoodler!! We had a *lovely* time—”

Kirk had to listen to details.

“So it all turned out *all* right; but my jaw’s still sore, you hot-headed devil you!—Y’know, Clinton, *you* didn’t knock me over, I’m a stone heavier than you. I’d got my heels together in the rut—Ha! ha! I told her I’d got toothache and she must only kiss me on the right side!! Oh, Maudy darling!” laughed Charlie catching Kirk round the waist for a moment and waltzing.

Who could be vexed with Charlie? He was so hot-hearted, so gay, childishly frank, amusingly vain, rampant with health! and Kirk laughed heartily despite his disapproval.

CHAPTER XXII

THROUGH conveying to hospital one of his men, injured by an accident, Kirk met the surgeon-in-charge, who glanced at the bandaging and asked with a slight rise of eyebrow—

“Who put this on?”

“... I did,” said Kirk, feeling the rebuke.

“What! a civil engineer, and not an ambulance man?”

“No.”

“You ought to be, you know,” said the surgeon, as he took off the wrappings.

“Better join my class, beginning next week, one evening a week; ten shillings the course.”

Kirk said he would, and, later, he paid the fee. He showed aptitude, and before the end of the second month, helped the surgeon with the more backward members of the class.

As though purposely prepared he soon dealt with a serious injury. He arrived one evening early in September at the small house whose two front rooms he occupied, and he found his landlady's neighbours round the doorway. A few minutes earlier she had fallen in the garden. Her leg was broken. Going in he saw Mrs. Higgins lying on the couch. Her left leg plainly was bent slightly backwards from half-way down the shin. Both bones obviously were broken, and very plainly the leg was in a shockingly bad position, hanging half off the sofa-end, and causing such extreme pain that no one dared even touch the sufferer. Kirk instructed two women, who stood ready to take Mrs. Higgins by the arms, and then Kirk firmly and gently drew on the heel the while

he straightened the leg. The bones went into place, the sharp cries of pain ceased, and Kirk held the limb rigidly in position while the two women drew the patient well up on the sofa. With cushions Kirk now firmly propped up the controlless foot. He sent a woman for brandy, bade the patient keep absolutely still, and, there being no one else as speedy as himself, he rushed off for the doctor.

During the weeks that followed he endeared himself to the old lady by helping to nurse her. He took turns frequently with the young married daughter, who had come on hearing of the accident. She was a capable girl but burdened with her first baby, which was only twelve months old. Kirk offered to go elsewhere but the daughter said they could manage, and they did. He entered into the difficulties of the little household and learned to scramble eggs and do other useful operations. He even "took the baby" on occasions, made good friends with the wee girl, and learnt what he called "the correct handholds." He brought the pretty old lady flowers and delicacies, and read to her. She was cheered, too, by the fact that this accident had brought about a genuine reconciliation with her married sons and daughters.

On receipt of Kirk's telegram, her husband, Mr. Higgins, left his van-full of tracts and travelled down reluctantly from Oxfordshire. He had tea with Kirk. He was a lean, yellow, frog-mouthed person in semi-clerical attire. Every time he opened his mouth to speak, a text came unctuously out of it. He ate surprisingly and when at last satisfied he confided, hoarsely whispering:—

"I left my van and came down, Mr. Clinton, because of what the neighbours might say if I remained absent; a broken leg is a broken leg, and we cannot scrutinise the will of God. Is there any afflicted among you (Mr. Higgins's voice became louder, and very sanctimonious) let him pray, James, five, thirteen, again I considered all travel and every right work that for this a man is envied of his neighbour,

Ecclesiastes, four, four, and thou shalt visit thy habitation and shalt not sin, Job, five, twenty-four—" and the old man stopped to take in more wind.

"Good Lord!"

"I beg your pardon, Sir?"

"Nothing, thank you, I must go out now."

"I thought you had only just entered from your affairs of business, Sir?"

"Well—yes, but I shall go for a walk now."—The old man retained a glassy gaze, and before Kirk could escape and close the door was saying in oleaginous trance-like sing-song—"Ephesians, five, thirteen, see that ye walk circumspectly not as fools but as . . ."

"This old Asiatic wine," thought Kirk, "swells these ugly little modern bottles into no classic shape!"

Kirk continued systematically to gather his geologic data, both in Cirenhampton and the neighbourhood. And as he collected, he wrote. Not yet did he believe the proper study of mankind is man. His Gaelic-Celtic strain of blood was, however, stirring more and more within him.

"For acuteness and valour the Greeks."

"For imperious pride, the Romans."

"For love of beauty and amouressness, the Gaedhils."

The hard still records of countless life gone to dust revolted his youth, and he began to cast a glamour over those bare facts. He felt the very air and saw the waves of ancient seas; he carried himself back to old lands, long gone to sands and silts. He seemed to feel the spirits of the prehistoric men move about him as he found their old weapons. He imagined their voices in the voices of the waters rippling through the flinty river-strands, on which he stood and dreamed. He accumulated his facts from the prehistoric gravels and the peaty graves, and inlaid them with a magic of his imagination when he wrote them. He could hear

the chipped flint tinkle as it fell, struck from the forming weapon; he could hear the wild children laugh; and it had all gone, for ever?

“ . . . For not dubious or uncertain,
Man then lived with subtle brain;
Lived and hunted, loved and hated,
And o’er the world’s domain,
His lordship by his soul alone
Victorious did maintain.

“In this frayed chip that bears the mark
Of a primæval hand,
The newer man, with eyes to see
And soul to understand,
May see and dimly reckon up
The stages sure and grand,
In the vast stretch of time between
The ancient hand and mind.

“And the last touch of skill in work
The last thought has defined,
In the lustrous strength of reason,
By the genius of our kind.

“For all our work, our highest soul,
Is present in the face
Of this old weapon thrown aside
By a half-human race,
In darkest prehistoric time,
And its last resting place.”

The old professor, full of years, travels, honours, was often moved despite himself, while—in the first portion of the thesis—he perused the written thoughts of Kirk. But resolutely he cut out all that inlaying. For the severely cold atmosphere of the scientific is at enmity with all but hard fact.

One chilly day in October Kirk entered the office and Charlie gravely handed him a letter and remarked as he did so—

"I've had one from the Old Man on the same subject, worse luck."

Kirk read the letter, gave it to his colleague, and stood motionless, filled with sadness, feeling himself exiled. Charlie read these words:—

"London, Oct. 15, 19—.

"DEAR MR. CLINTON,

"Your work is now drawing to a close at Cirenhampton, and I have decided to place you in charge of a more important contract in the north. Richard Brough, my chief agent for the north of England, will instruct you, and advise you when necessary. Please report yourself to him this day fortnight, at No. 345 Cross Street, Manchester. In the meantime, please see that all is in order on your present work, obtain and certify all accounts outstanding, and leave all as straight as you can, before handing over charge to my nephew.

"I am pleased with your work and service at Cirenhampton. You have done well; and, from date of joining in the north, your salary will be ninety pounds (£90) per annum.

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES BENDIGO."

"I'm awfully sorry you're going, Clinton. . . . I don't really know what Bill and me will do without you—you've got into things so well, and now . . . well!—" Charlie shrugged his shoulders.

"It's good of you, Charlie, to say so, but I do feel it . . . this uprooting."

"So do I, I'm *damned* if I don't! . . . Never mind. . . . Come and have a drink! Come on, Clinton, you're upset; then we'll go and tell poor old Bill. It *will* wax him up. . . . 'work drawing to a close!' indeed! that's just like the Old Man, it's a long way off the close, and he knows it, too. That's three times he's left me in a hole at the end of a job . . . and then you, Clinton, I must say he might have made the figure higher. . . . Yes, you'll be with Brough, at first, I suppose. He's chief agent in the north. He's very clever, but he's got a temper. Won't have me near him! The Old

Man's fond of him—thinks he's goin' to marry one of my cousins! ha! ha! but we know Old Brough, Jim and me do! He's fond of all girls, but keeps it quiet. Not like me! what? ha-ha! But *you'll* like him, his people are regular nob's; got a place down in Somerset, regular old county family, you know; thinks no end of himself, and he's an A.M.I.C.E., but he does damned well for the firm. I've thought for some time the Old Man would send you to a bigger job."

Quickly the fortnight passed away. On a mild clear morning faintly sunny after rain, Kirk said good-bye to his landlady. She had limped to the garden gate, and two tears ran down her old apple-cheeks. Kirk turned back a couple of strides, leaned over the gate, put his hands on her shoulders, and kissed her on each cheek, and then again set off.

But Bill had arrived first on the platform; and clasped against his manly but slouching form was a large parcel. The queer shape lent some apology for the hopeless struggle Bill obviously had undergone with string and wrappings. Gingerly he set down the package between the chocolate and try-your-weight machines. He grunted with relief as he freed himself of this incumbrance. Soon afterwards, Kirk was in the carriage and leaned from the window, his hand firmly gripped:—

"Good-bye, Charlie, you've been very kind to me. Good-bye, Bill, old friend. I hope we'll do more work together."

"Good-bye, Morster Clin—*Dem!*" cried Bill, forcibly reversing himself. "I'd forgit thet bleddy clock!"

Darkly glancing, stern with suppressed emotion, Bill brought and thrust into Kirk's hands the enormity of cardboard, insufficient string and paper.

"F'r you, Sir, from me and my old-ton-o'-beef. *F'r win you gits merried!*"

Bill and Charlie silently watched the tail of the train diminish and pass from sight.

Feeling a mutual bereavement, they left the station, and

early though the day was they turned into the nearest bar. Bill cast a morose downward glance at Charlie, then took up the glass and at one gulp swallowed his gin. He put the glass down too smartly, with a movement of irritation, and turned to Charlie.

"Each time I brings up a young hingineer . . . *learns 'im* wat 'e *knows*, . . . then Brough or one o' them swell duds *wornts 'im* . . . must 'ev 'im!"

"What? Brought up Clinton! Why, Bill, my boy, he's taught *you* a thing or two! Ha! ha! ha! I like that, Bill; you're getting too blown up, dashed if you won't be shoving M.I.C.E. after your name next!"

"Yus, and I've a right to"—darkly said Bill, very deliberately and emphatically—"when I think o' some of them as 'ev got it."

"Here! Poor old Bill! cheero! mop another! here you are, mop it off! dashed if I don't feel, wat-the-devil? Sad or something . . . hope he won't go and get caught by some rotten fool of a girl . . . yes, now I think of it, that's what I've thought about him, Bill. You needn't sneer; I'd be damned sorry to hear that . . ."

"Well, Morster Chorlie, . . . if *you* worze a bit like 'im," . . . Stumped for analogy, Bill moved his great gaunt body, smiled sardonically, and concluded—

"I seppose! . . . you'd not be Morster Chorlie! wd-yer?"

About noon Kirk walked up from the station, by himself, for Mary was in London. Severnly seemed most strange, yet familiar, and very dear to him, and he was filled with emotion. He made several hasty calls—every one seemed to bear very kind feelings towards him; each was so glad to see him, and to hear of his success. At length he approached his own home.

He stood beneath the curved Georgian over-porch and rang the bell. The well-remembered sound awoke in him feelings from the old life. He felt glad that he was free.

The maid, astonished, exclaimed, "Master Kirk!" then opened the door wide and let him in. She showed him into the drawing-room, which was fireless. He remained standing and his father entered.

"Is this you, Kirkpatrick?"

"Yes, father."

Mr. Clinton fixed his piercing eyes on his son. "You have altered very much. Come into the dining-room. This room is cold."

A large fire blazed there—and Kirk remembered his father's susceptibility to cold, due to residence in hot countries.

"Sit down, Kirkpatrick."

They began to speak of engineering, and, warming a little, Kirk told his father of certain new methods used at Cirenhampton. But the conversation soon flagged—for Mr. Clinton each time replied carelessly,

"Yes, yes, I know all about that—yes."

"But surely, father, there are new ideas and methods?"

"Not at all—I think we did just the same when I was a young man, just the same, yes . . . yes."

Kirk mentioned that he was on his way to the North of England—but his father appeared not to hear him.

"What Church do you go to?"

". . . Well, father . . . I have lately been to the Church of England."

"You will not succeed in your profession without God. I have heard rumours about you."

The son did not reply. After a slight pause he stood up.

"Well, father, I must be going now."

"Why? Where are you going to? When are you going on?"

"At eight, to-night."

"Then come and dine with me at six-thirty."

"Thank you, father, but I have already accepted Mrs. Dugdale's invitation. . . . I met her in the town."

"Humph!—you are going there?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can stop and lunch with me."

"I'm so sorry, father, for I had no idea . . . I have promised the Minnotts and I have to go there now."

"Ah, very well," said Mr. Clinton, resuming his ordinary manner.

"Good-bye, Kirkpatrick; and remember, you will not succeed without God."

Kirk took his father's proffered hand, then glanced round once more at all the familiar things in the room—and departed, unconsciously breathing freely when the heavy outer door had closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXIII

RICHARD BROUGH—better known as Dick—from early boyhood desired to be a farmer, a great farmer. His parents well knew their son's wish; but they ignored his bent. Dick, like his father before him, went first to Charterhouse, and thence to Oxford. When he left school, he begged hard that he might go to a college of agriculture. But the father overruled the son, who went with but an ill grace to Oxford. The young man predetermined that he would not long remain there, and, in his first term, after increasing offences and deliberate indiscipline, he was sent down for ingeniously removing and secreting the doors of his college chapel. The disappointment hardened the father's heart. He refused his son permission to learn agriculture. Dick, become much bored at home, finally acquiesced in his own articleship to the Chief Engineer of an English railway. The agreement was signed, and Dick left home.

In the five years that followed he lived mostly in a large northern city; and under a very able man, sympathetic, of firm character, young Brough did well. A strong liking grew between himself and his chief. Farming began to be forgotten. His chief scrupulously saw to it that Brough was well trained in both theory and practice: and while nominally a pupil in the office, Dick, for two years of the five, studied in the somewhat famous technical university of the city. These five years of conscientious effort, hard brain-work, hard hand-work in the "Shops," the very early hours, the bitter winters, the daily contact with hard heads, the influence of a clever finely-bred man, the chief—all these had wrought together well upon the natural determined character of Brough. And,

through all, he had preserved the courteous manner of his youth. His accent had remained pure, and he possessed good taste in dress.

Brough was now in his thirty-fifth year. Moderate in stature, he was yet well-built. Habitually he bore a somewhat gaily-aggressive air of capability, a calm alertness, a look of cheerful readiness for anything. His eyes, greenish brown, were shrewd and frank; his thick and brown close-clipped moustache and his ruddy skin bespoke good health. His shaven chin was strong and slightly pointed. The hands were small but knotted, well cared for, and were far too scientific for a farmer.

Brough mentally was penetrative and agnostic; morally he was truthful, frank, honourable; yet he was very shrewd. He possessed a lively sense of humour, and his laugh, short and quick, never failed him. He spoke habitually in a vein of gentle irony and raillery, seldom appearing to regard life with any seriousness. He was never damped, and he never lost his temper. Antagonists amused him. The more serious and angry a letter, the more did Brough amiably chuckle.

Brough was much occupied when Clinton arrived. After a brief word or two, Kirk sat for some time and waited. He saw Brough was in the middle of a knot in some design; and soon he guessed Brough was impatient or dissatisfied. Kirk thought he looked very tired about the eyes. After much use of india-rubber, the elder man stood up from the drawing; and, keeping his eyes upon the board, walked shortly to and fro—mentally absorbed—the while he filled a pipe. He did not speak, but once more bent over the work. More measuring, pencilling and rubbing out followed, and then Brough suddenly threw down his dividers, turned round on his stool, laughed slightly, and spoke to Kirk.

"I'm engineer to 'Chiltern Water Limited.' Was before I joined Bendigo. Chiltern held on to my valuable services. Not enough water now. Got to sink another well. . . . L.G.B. worrying us too, about a siphon. By-the-bye! Old

Man Bendigo in long character-sketch of K. Clinton told me you're a geologist? That's so, isn't it?"

"Oh! . . . I know a bit," said Kirk, and smiled.

"Then what would be the effect of a second well? Say, fifty feet from the first? You see I could then do without a second boiler-house—and of course still further away means buying more land, in fact it means another station. What supply would I get from a second well, close to the other?"

"Your present well is in chalk?"

"Yes, all in chalk."

"What depth?"

"Sixty feet of dug, and three hundred bored, eight-inch bore."

"Well," said Kirk, "in general, if only fifty feet apart, you would not get as much from the second as you now draw from the first. You might secure only a 25 per cent. increase over your present supply, but you might possibly get even a 75 per cent. increase. It depends chiefly on relative position of the two wells, and on the regional nature of the chalk." Kirk took a sheet of paper, and made two dots upon it a few inches apart.

"Suppose those are two wells. Pump them continuously and each drains a cone of chalk round itself. The point of each cone is the bottom of each well. These two circles I draw round each dot are the rims of the inverted cones, at surface-level or, rather, at water-level. You see how they intersect each other? how they cut into each other? So when the cones of drainage intersect, the maximum supply of each well is of course definitely lessened. Their drainage areas overlap. When the chalk is very dense and rather impermeable, these wells can be put closer, without one affecting the other. But if the chalk is open, loose, and thoroughly permeable, then the cones of drainage will be very large, and two wells beside each other will drain practically from the same cone. If your Chiltern well fills very fast after long pumping, it indicates open permeable chalk. You see, there is a good deal to be

considered. In dense chalk, or the chalk-marl, the first well may strike a fissure; the second may miss it. Then, too, when boring, the chalk interstices sometimes get choked badly by the débris from the bore tools, and so, although in good porous chalk, your cone may yet be rather narrow, or irregular in shape; but there's a new remedy for this—charges of high explosive banged off in the bore-hole! they make cavities, and thus increase the infiltration-surface. Of course, if you dug all your present well, you would get more water; and more storage; and then, too, if you liked you could drive adit-tunnels from the bottom; but how far down is the Greensand? That might pay for a deeper boring in the present well? There is a good deal to be considered, isn't there?"

". . . Where did you pick all this up, young fellow?" said Brough, regarding Kirk with much interest.

"You shall give me a hand with my report later on—if you will. That was very well put. Very sound. We'll experiment. I've got all the geological maps and sections here. I'll take you down there!"

Kirk smiled with pleasure, but said modestly, "My father is clever at wells, and the rest is merely elementary geology." Brough looked at him, then took a deep breath, jumped up, took his pencil, and cried—

"Once more into the breach, dear friends! Once more into the breach!" He bent over the drawing and remained silent for but a few moments.

"I was never much good at design . . ." murmured he—"had no need of it for years, now . . . forgotten it! Come and look at this." . . . "Chamberhead of a big siphon; if siphon burst it would wash a dear lil village away, so Papa L.G.B. says" . . . "The idea is, in such a case, to close the conduit gradually, automatically, infallibly, see? . . . Well, what do you think of that?"

Kirk for a full minute looked closely at the drawing.

"Too elaborate," said he very quietly, and then he pointed out what appeared to him defective. He stood up from the

table, and looked at the drawing, intently thinking. Brough turned his head and watched him with great secret interest. Kirk's face lit up, he seized a pencil and drew rapidly on a spare sheet and then said, "How do you like that—the *idea*?" . . . and he explained his sketch.

"It's a positive inspiration, my dear fellow!" and then Brough continued in a funny drawl—"But you've been and gone and spoilt the whole show! Now I can't conscientiously use my own notion! and I'm over head and ears with work; eleven it was, last night, before I left this cube of air in which we sit."

"Let me do it, Mr. Brough; I can easily do it! I love design!"

"Will you? Will you? . . . That would be a great help, let me see: . . . yes . . . Bruside can well wait a day or two for genius . . . you have something of that look about you . . . Kirkpatrick . . . You shall be Kirkpatrick . . . save when I am cross or grave."

At seven o'clock, Brough took Kirk from his drawing.

"Come! amiable, ingenious, industrious Kirkpatrick, we must feed these mighty intellects, and return . . . I hope you are not tired, Clinton?"

"Oh no, thank you."

At two o'clock in the morning they went to Brough's rooms, and, the household being asleep, they put together a camp-bed and Kirk slept in the same room as Brough.

Two days and evenings of hard work followed in which a preliminary report on Chiltern was drafted. Next afternoon, they were to go to Bruside.

Brough wrote a cheque for five guineas and gave it to Kirk. "For geological advice, and many thank you's for it, Kirkpatrick."

"But I'm already paid, by Mr. Bendigo?"

"Not at all, not at all, most innocent cock-virgin! he don't pay you enough, nor do I. This is my own affair. Mr. Ben-

digo would have no objection. Of course you needn't mention it to bountiful beautiful Charlie."

So Kirk took the money with great pleasure. Generosity was a trait he very much admired.

CHAPTER XXIV

THIS was a crowd of people quite different from any he had seen. They poured in and out of the big dirty and endless station. Kirk, deeply absorbed, looked at them as he waited. These new people were in the mass small, or thick-set, alert, intelligent, merry, witty yet uncouth in movement, speech and dress. Yes, they were warmly, but very badly dressed, the women equally with the men.

It was plain, too, that they were remarkably social. Most of the people on these platforms stared rudely at Kirk, and made very audible remarks. His general manner and calm aloofness, in especial his puttees, excited interest and a rude wit, for he was in that part of the station where terminates a long line from one of the most enclosed and clannish dales in south-east Yorkshire. "Ay! they're rough fowlk there!" say even Yorkshiremen, from districts but little better polished.

The engine was painted black. Even the first and second-class carriages looked bare and dirty; they were inferior to many a third-class carriage on southern railways. Brough returned with two first-class tickets. He and Kirk took their seats in the crowded train. Silent surprise filled the younger man as he found his fellow first-class passengers were merely some of the crowd, awkwardly dressed in top-hats and cut-away coats. This dress was their only distinction. They spoke the same broad dialect as the crowd, and all their conversation was commercial, kitchenly domestic, or of very local athletics. Kirk began to see that differences of caste among this folk were solely financial. Money, and brains for money-making forthwith determined one's position. It seemed that breeding, science, learning, art and literature, could have no

place or voice or power in this unknown part of the world he was to live in; and he felt a painful separateness and revulsion. To relieve this feeling he conjured up with intense affection visions of the heaths and rich vales of Cirenhampton, now so divided from him. He knew not yet how kind were these people; he was unaware they admired refinement in others, even though they did not permit it, except with great suspicion, in the clan.

Presently the train began to grind and thump its way out over very bad permanent-way, first between successions of blank begrimed walls, and then through broken and precipitous clay-ground all thickly built over with factories, or rows of small blackened houses. These black buildings and dwellings were set at every possible angle and direction with each other. There was no order. The environs of the city were heavily pallid by smoke, the sky was foully soiled, and darkening. Kirk looked down into steaming oily reservoirs of condensing-water; and up again at greasy works—built on highly sloping ground—having every window lower than its neighbour, and already, at half-past two filled with yellow lights. He saw houses on the verge of cliffs of drab clay, naked, dirty clay—deeply furrowed by rain, and dangerously cut away from the buildings it supported. Every solitary tree and bush and flower had many years ago given up the struggle for life. Not a pot of flowers or fern showed inside a dwelling-house. Kirk now discovered more and more frequently the small dirty river that made polluted way beneath and through this mournful complex. At last houses became less frequent, less up-and-down-hill, and soon he looked out at miles and miles of passing mounds and shapeless banks; they too were all trodden or poisoned bare of every vestige of living green. Even the coltsfoot, spreading coarse grey leaves, opening in March its welcome yellow flowers on the grey ruin of coal-mines, here was absent. A drizzling rain commenced, and the drear hardened surfaces Kirk looked on became wet and slippery, and reflected dully the light that filtered through

the unbroken canopy of smoke. After this waste came a mile or two of melancholy parkland, still preserved from the universal digging, delving, and building, yet all the more drear from the blackened dying trees that looked so miserable and dirty—like the shabby-genteel starving, whom one sees sitting dejected on the public seats of the wealthier British cities.

Presently the population became less dense, the sky lightened, and Kirk looked forth upon the almost unbroken succession of great woollen mills, dye-works, bleach-works, chemical-works, brick-works, calico print works, engineering works, and an occasional cotton-mill. Brough in somewhat unusual serious and kindly mood pointed to several of these as they were passed.

“Those people make half the serge for the Navy.”—“All those white sails at Cowes come from that dirty place.”—“Yes, I suppose it does seem ugly to you, Clinton, but you’ll soon get used to it; I remember I thought once I never could live here! I had just come down from Sussex, but now, you know, it seems all right. . . . You feel like that, don’t you? —Yes, I thought you did.”

Brough turned a hard smile and a kind eye on his young companion. He was a keen observer. “They are not bad people, Clinton, you will soon get used to it all. It’s dirty, but it’s where the money is made, and you’ll have excellent experience.” Somewhat comforted, Kirk sat and listened to the extraordinarily harsh accents that burst in when the carriage door opened at one of the work-a-day stations.

Low distant hills appeared on each side; they were void of trees or beauty, and looked cold, naked, and begrimed. These hills grew nearer and higher, puffs of steam were seen upon them, their sides were scarred and deeply trenched by cableways, brick-works and quarries. Soon afterwards the train entered a deep but open valley in which grass and trees of a kind at least relieved the eyes. The station-names were now very expressive—Ramsclough, Little Shaw, Grinden, Old

Mill, Stoneyclough, Strubble Carr, Mon End, Delfhole, Blue-pits, Quarrside, Cablefoot, New Mill, Brickhouse, Moorbottom, etc. They were, indeed, in keeping with the bare stone-walled pasture of the hill-sides, with the cold discoloured river, rushing between the greasy boulders and among the littered slabs of grey shale; they were in agreement with the ugly buildings of laborious human life, crowded in patches along the narrowing valley-bottom.

The sky had cleared before the train drew up at Bruside. Clinton with his companion stepped out into an air smokey indeed to a fine observer, but much purer and colder than that which they had left behind. Here the valley-floor widened, and here in consequence the water engineers had determined to spread out and build their works, their great filters, wells, reservoirs, and pumping-stations. The long oval flat, or "carr," was hemmed in eastwards by the dirty river, rushing in a great curve beneath high steepes of clay and stone; above this curve rose heavy shoulders of grey tumbled grass, set with naked stunted hawthorn bushes. Five hundred feet higher, hidden by the shoulders of the hills, stood the little town of Bruside.

Westward the rough pastures rose up more smoothly from the carr, and in this misty afternoon one could not see the more distant hills and moors: nor were visible the factories and works that everywhere occupied their deep folds. A small tenacious winter-beaten wood, already leafless, filled the narrow side-valley that entered at the far end of the carr.

Brough and Clinton made their way, between heaps of plant and materials, towards the middle of the open land, and there they looked round. Brough explained the works, the arrangements, what had been commenced, what was immediately to be done. As they walked about he gave Kirk many useful hints and particulars. From the painful intensity of new impressions, of gazing on these new unfriendly scenes, Kirk with effort drew himself down into his objective self. He forced himself to listen and attentively observe. As they

walked about they were at times almost choked with heavy green cement dust, with fine red dust from the crushers, smoke from the pumps, and hot fumes from several kilns that were burning rough bricks. The navvies, Kirk noticed, were all Irishmen,—“They come over to Liverpool and find their way here,” said Brough—“They make very good navvies, but are no good as gangers. . . . Well, we’ll now go and have a look at the plans.”

They approached two old cottages of grimy stone, which stood in a waste of upturned boulder-clay. Recently there had been three cottages, but one prematurely had been pulled down—wrenched off as it were from its fellows. On the exposed gable-end, the blue lime-washed plaster of the vanished bedroom and the marks left by a staircase showed in the raw afternoon.

The remaining cottages were now being used as stores and temporary office.

The Bruside* quarry owner who supplied the works with stone and rubble awaited them. Brough spoke to Kirk as they walked towards this gaunt north-country man.

“You will find Aikrigg a very decent fellow, Clinton, and he said he would get some rooms for you; he says there is no hotel or inn where you can stay. I have never myself been up to Bruside.”

Kirk struggled with an intense nausea and repulsion to all this. He felt unaccountably unwell. He knew at heart, now, that he hated the engineering life, that he longed to be freed from it for ever, to leave for ever all these people so deeply wrapped in work and money. But his inbred sense of duty and obedience was stronger, and in the midst of physical and spiritual depression he sought conscientiously to forget no detail essential to his immediate charge of these works.

The plans were unrolled upon a rough table of boards, a lamp was lit in the dark cottage, and Brough pointed out particulars while Kirk listened, or questioned. Then the chief

* Bruside should be pronounced—Broo-side.

foreman, the timekeeper and the accountant were introduced in turn, with scant ceremony, and, of course, without handshake.

"This, Stallabrass, is Mr. Clinton, your new engineer."

They greeted him with friendliness, it seemed, after keen glances—

"Good afternoon, Sir."

"Good afternoon, Sir."

It was quite dusk when Brough prepared to return. With Aikrigg, he and Kirk left the cottages. White mists were creeping and rising from the heavy and saturated clayey ground.

"Well, good-bye, Clinton; send for me or come down and see me, if you want anything important, and . . . oh! I forgot—old man Bendigo insists on his engineers in the North themselves going to bank and personally bringing the money back, so you better come and see me each Friday. You'll receive a blank cheque from London some time in the week, and you must fill it up for what you require—Baker here will give you the amount, and you must look into it yourself and personally see the men paid. It's a fad of the Old Man. . . .

"No? you did not do that in the South? . . .

"No, don't bother seeing me off, Aikrigg will take you up to Bruside by some short cut he knows. Good-bye, Clinton . . . if you do as well as I hear you've done at Cirenhampton, you'll do very well indeed."

Mr. Aikrigg soon after was toiling up to Bruside with the new engineer. They went up through rough pasture-fields, walking slowly up a cinder-path beside dry-stone black walls, a path so steep that every now and then they halted for breath.

The weak daylight of November had almost gone, the air was become much colder, and the valley beneath them filled itself with heavy vapours. Somewhere below roared a river-weir. The large mill beneath them was brilliantly lit inside,

and the windows of a second mill glowed faintly yellow at the far end of the extensive misty works. But overhead the sky showed a very dark grey-blue. The hills, that formed the distant valley-side to the south and west, were shrouded with becalmed smoke and fog drifts, but a ruddy sunset seemed to lie beyond.

Kirk again felt that new and unaccountable deep depression. He also felt physically cold, and his skin shrank and crept with the wretched sensations that indicate a temperature. He turned up the collar of his great coat. He felt a tightness over his forehead; he suffered a kind of homesickness, and also a sickness of the body. He experienced a miserable distaste and fear, quite new to him, and he conjectured dully that it must be due to this barbarous environment. Meanwhile he toiled slowly up with his big adviser. At length they came into a broad road graded along the flanks of a bare shoulder in the rounded lower hills. A few strong bushes dotted the near slopes, but there were no trees. Abstractedly Kirk noticed there were gas-lamps along this open hill-road, that the paths were of black cinder, and, beneath the lamps, his gaze fell on the uncommonly massive kerbstones of the setted road. His intelligence, unasked, told his weary mind—"A stone country, with heavy wheeled traffic."

"Ar'm feared tha'll fainde this a cowl plerce, Mesther?"

"Yes, it feels much colder here."

. . . "Art coom fra' South?"

"Yes, from Hampshire; a lovely country."

"Ar thote so, bey tha' talk. Mesther Brough cooms reet fra South, he laffs at our talk!" Aikrigg himself laughed shortly and good naturedly—"He says konno unnerston it! not all."

"We're hey opp now, look yon!" said Aikrigg, turning round and pausing to rest.

Kirk gazed over the dark tumbled country, and saw faint distant rows of yellow lights, where the graded setted roads climbed out of the valleys, only to descend again to the in-

numerable towns and villages. He saw distant clustered lights that marked townships that were unhidden. High and dark hills spread out opposite to him; the deep valley from which he had ascended lay between.

"Yonder th' moors! There's nae but a farm or two for mony a mile," said Aikrigg, looking with his young companion, and he added in a friendly way, "It'll seem wild-like to y'r, i' these parts?"

"Yes . . . how high are all those hills?"

Aikrigg laughed at the strange question—

"Ay, ar'm sure ar konno tell tha! . . . But there's soom big uns; Rebpike's biggest, ther ser."

They walked on: stone "flags" underfoot took the place of cinders, and the small town of Bruside began with a house or two on left and right of the broad stone road. Where the gas lamps showed them, Kirk looked closely at the strongly built stone houses; they were somehow the barest he had ever seen. They showed not an inch of eaves. A pair of hewn stones, tall and rough, made the two doorway sides, a third made the lintel. Window openings were the same. There were no gardens, no hedges to the houses, and their enclosures were fenced by means of paving slabs, set on edge, and clamped top and bottom with rough iron. Through gapways he still perceived dimly the hills rising steeply into darkness on the left. On the right was the steep descent towards the dark valley; and the low mournful note, hollow and hornlike, from an engine drawing its winding train down there, now came up softly out of the deep trough.

Some women now passed Kirk, their heads and forms shrouded by thick shawls. From these cowls they gazed curiously as they hurried past. The unusual rattling of their feet made Kirk ask Aikrigg—

"Do they wear clogs here?"

"Yi, all t'lasses wears clogs, except o' Sundays."

"Yool unnerstan, Mesther," began Aikrigg, walking still

slower, "it's verra difficult to find where to put tha, here; fowk lives ith ther orn plerces, and they mostly none wants strerngers amoong them. They all warks at mill, tha knaws, and gets good munney; they'd rathher wark nor let lodgings. Messes Gisburn's offen had fowk in, but i' Bruside tha mun et and met wi fowk if tha unnerstons me, Mesther Clenton?"

"You mean they must live and eat all together?"

"That's it, young fella!" said Aikrigg, with relief. "That's it, Mesther, they're verra proud fowk i' Bruside, tho arm nōne so gradeley proud mysen, as soom. I'd a takken thee in joost to please Mesther Brough—Arve a respect to him, and a' said thee wert a decent chap—Yo could have tha orn plerce and meat for awt I mind—but ar'm thronged wi' children, and all th'rooms takken-oop."

"Thank you, Mr. Aikrigg, for the kind intention."

"Oh it's nowt, Mesther. But this is Messes Gisburn's; if tha'll stop here a'll goo in and tell her."

He knocked with one hand as he turned the door-knob and went in. He closed the door after himself.

There was a lamp-post quite near, and Kirk looked up at the house. It looked older and was much larger than its neighbours, and was quite detached. This house was peculiar, for the entrance was at one side, the back faced the roadway and the rising hills. In relation to the main street this house was back to front. The broad gable-end that caught the lamp-light had been tarred, it seemed. The ground or field, or whatever it was, evidently fell steeply away from the hidden front of the house, and, over the slab-stone wall, and past the house, Kirk could see the opaque darkness of the distant moorland, beyond the great valley out of which he had ascended.

A short distance up the setted street stood a man in the well of a sturdily built hawker's cart. Kirk had not before seen a cart like this. Fixed to the uncouth vehicle flared a petroleum lamp. The brilliant light showed a strong cob that stood still, but with head drooping. The bearded weather-

beaten hawker took up an old bell, sad-voiced, mellow and low of note. Strangely measured, "beat—beat" . . . "beat—beat" . . . the four solemn clangs fell on the night, and in the long pause following a sad dirge commenced in equal rhythm a wild but slow and sorrowful tune through Kirk's imagination, and he remembered the day at Junipen.

An approaching pattering of small clogs brought him back to where he stood. Two forms shrouded in shawls were briskly coming towards him down the wide stone path, and with them was a slim man. After them came a procession of people; men, women, girls and boys, evidently returning from the woollen-mills and the day's work.

Kirk stood beneath the lamp and the man and two girls or women—Kirk could not tell which—slowed their steps as they reached him, fell into single file, and almost stopped as Kirk made way for them. The girls gazed at him intently from beneath their shawls, then passed him to enter the house. But the second girl hesitated, turned back, slipped her shawl off her head, slightly smiled at him, then turned again and went in, leaving the door wide ajar. Kirk had caught a sharp view of a pair of broad young shoulders, a good form, clear kindly eyes, two dimples, a smoothed head of pale shining hair, a deep fringe on the forehead, a slightly heavy chin, and full lips. At this moment a woman's voice called out within—"Gurls! Marian! Jim! Whatever are ye doing? Ask him to come in, Mr. Aikrigg!" Aikrigg and the girl who had paused now came out together.

"Ar think tha'll be ar reet here, Mesther Clenton"—Aikrigg was smiling—"Aw've seed th' owd leddy for thee. Aw! Marian! he'll nōne be wi'out company, lass, eh?—Goodneet. . . . Ay never mention it! tha'll be well looked after here. Goodneet, Marian! Goodneet!"

Jim asked Kirk in. Marian followed them. Jim was tall, thin, about thirty-two years of age, and quite unlike his sisters, for his face was thin and long, his nose large and

long, his eyes brown, his hair black. He had a cheerful manner, and a most musical voice. He helped Kirk off with his great coat. Kirk unconsciously forgave the accent, for the sweetness of the voice. Marian had waited; her eyes now shone as she followed the two men. She looked all over Kirk's form, especially at his well-cut breeches and his shapely putteed legs.

In a large well-lit living-room Kirk found himself facing a strong, tall, and spare woman, some sixty years of age. Her thin hard mouth drooped at the corners. By her hard face, her calm eyes, her deep lines, one judged correctly that she had known and bitterly combated with trouble.

Jim, and his younger sisters Dinah and Marian, stood with their gaze riveted on Kirk. But Ruth, eldest of the four, went on with her work, quickly set the table for a meal and went hastily to and from the kitchen.

Kirk first shook hands with Mrs. Gisburn, and then she introduced him simply, giving each name.

"This is Marian, she's third . . ." and Kirk took the girl's hand. She it was who turned back a moment at the door. Kirk thought her about twenty.

Then he took Jim's rough and hard hand. "He's th' second, he's fettler at mill. . . .

"This is Dinah, she's th' youngest here." Dinah had a hard mouth but was otherwise a rather plump and pretty little dark blonde. Her sharp eyes were blue. Marian's were grey. Marian was a fair girl and had a splendid mass of pale golden hair. Calling the eldest girl Mrs. Gisburn said, "This is Ruth, she stays at home mostly . . . an' I've another gurl, my own, t'youngest, Jane, oop at Thirsk, wi' her aunt and uncle." Mrs. Gisburn paused a moment, then went on speaking.

"I call them mine, but I'm their stepmother. I've brought them all oop, sin' they were varry small . . . so like they'll call me mother . . . their name's Butterworth." Then Mrs. Gisburn again looked at Kirk, attentively and kindly.

“Ay! but ye look fair peaked! Sit ye down now, do.” And turning on Jimmie, Marian, and Dinah, who had stood there motionless and fascinated, she spoke sharply—

“Gurls, be quick! Jim, lad! don’t stand sturing! Get the tea!” All three promptly moved off.

“All right, it’s ready, mother,” mildly said Ruth as she went quickly into the kitchen. She had a steady patient look in her dark grey eyes. Her high prominent forehead, her small disciplined mouth, her dark neat hair, the delicate pale complexion, her unobtrusive useful figure, all were in keeping with the gentle and resigned nun-like aspect that she presented. It was very evident she would not be so worldly, nor possess the temper of her stepmother—under whose domination Ruth had spent twenty-five years of her life, and she was now thirty-five.

CHAPTER XXV

UPON getting out of bed on this first Sunday, Kirk did not feel at all well, and in the glass he noticed how oddly blue and shrunken his face appeared. But he went to church with Jim and two of the girls. He went because Ruth had smiled sweetly, and asked him,

"Would you like to come to church with us, Mr. Clinton? We have such a comfortable pew, and such a nice minister."

He saw instinctively that Ruth's religion was her life, and on impulse he thanked her, and said he would go. He went upstairs and brought down the Book of Common Prayer given him by his Mother for use at Severnly. Ruth, now ready, glanced down at the little book.

"May I look at your prayer-book? Is it like ours?"

Smiling, he said, "Look." As she took the book it opened at the fly-leaf.

"What small, beautiful handwriting! . . . May I read it?"

"Yes," said Kirk, with feeling. "My mother wrote that."

Kirk, as he looked at Ruth's severely neat dress, thought to himself—"She is very different from the others, and she speaks quite well." He opened the house-door for Marian and her brother, then he followed beside Ruth. Seeming to know his thoughts, she said,

"I was to have been a teacher, I studied a great deal, and passed several examinations, but you see mother, my step-mother, wanted me at home—and it was my duty, you see, to be there."

Ruth by long habit again gently and easily repressed her

one great sorrow; she smiled, and Kirk with a feeling of respect glanced sideways at the ecstatic face.

The church had plain windows, it was mill-like, newish, and yet had a massive pair of galleries crowded within it; the congregation was large, and mostly of families. To Kirk's eyes they seemed badly, dingily dressed, and the whole effect was, as Kirk expressed it to himself, "Old Wesleyan." He was not displeased to note that Jimmie, Ruth, and Marian, were among the better dressed. The vicar, Mr. Vosper, was an elderly rubicund man, but of refined face. He spoke with a pure cultured accent. Kirk, though grave enough to outward semblance, was amused when he found he was an object of great interest to the congregation, and at least four times he met the inquiring eye of the vicar.

Kirk ate his Sunday dinner with the family. In daylight he had noticed the dark rings beneath the girls' eyes, the lines produced by chronic long hours and tiredness. He felt sympathy for them having to do what seemed endless housework. The Saturday afternoon when they were home from the mill had been spent entirely in dusting, sweeping, washing, scouring, and in polishing the furniture. He had gone out for a walk, and on his return at dusk they had not finished. Mrs. Gisburn was in firm and strong command of these operations. Kirk thought the girls would have done wiser to have gone out of doors, breathed the fresh air, and enjoyed the pale unusual sunlight of November, on those hills that he desired already to explore. The girls' week-day hour of rising seemed most severe. In the cold and darkness of each early morning, Kirk heard Ruth's footsteps descend the faintly creaking stair. On the Monday morning he struck a match, and found the time was but a-quarter-to-five. Then he heard the heavier step of Mrs. Gisburn, and lastly the others followed—wearily, it seemed to him—and he felt a sense of shame, that a man, himself, should lie still and warm in bed, while these girls set out in the raw,

cold, unfinished night to commence their twelve-hour day. He inquired on Sunday, and was shocked to find these girls worked from 6 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. winter and summer, excepting only Saturdays, when they came home earlier.

He openly expressed his feelings, and the faces of the two younger girls hardened, saddened, and changed; but Mrs. Gisburn explained roundly, speaking more to Marian and Dinah than to Kirk, it seemed,—

“Aye, Mr. Clinton! ye don’t know Yorksheer folk! it’s all come-day, go-day, work-a-day, and always has been i’ this part o’ Yorksheer——” and at this moment Kirk surprisedly caught a wink from Jim’s eye.

Some secret fear had been aroused in Mrs. Gisburn’s mind; she rose from the table and whispered to the girls sharply but quietly and aside—

“Ruth! Marian! Dinah! what are ye sitting for? Gurls! come on! get the pots weshed! it’s after two o’clock! There’s lots to be done.”

Reluctantly they pushed their chairs back and moved wearily to obey the monotonous necessities of their lives.

Kirk had found himself without appetite; and what food he had tried to eat seemed coarse, unpleasant, and badly cooked. The step-mother, sisters and brother had all noticed Kirk’s want of appetite, and he had apologised and said it must be the change of climate. Ruth was a little troubled, and said to her sister while they “washed up” in the kitchen—

“Marian, do you think it is because he’s not used to our food?”

“Nay, I don’t think so, he looks a bit poorly to me . . . but isn’t he nice?”

Ruth—drying a plate—stopped, thought, and said, “Mother will worship him soon, if I know her.”

They knew too intimately what Ruth meant. Their step-mother was a good woman, but had been reared among cold winds, hard work, and little joy. Her mouth showed a se-

vere and self-willed character. She was not selfish, but she adhered rigidly to custom, and to those pitiless, ultra-energetic ways, in which she herself had been brought up. Except for a few days, she had never been outside this district. Respectability, money, work, independence, were the highest and the sole ideals of her environment. She had no imagination, and in that same furrow in which life had trained and started her, she had always remained. Mrs. Gisburn hardly understood any one being ill, most especially if they were of her own sex and family, but when on one or two occasions she had realised it—as in the case of her husband—she had at once been devoted, constant, and unremitting in such meagre attentions as occurred to her; but by then the patient had been beyond her help. Yet she had adulated her husband. She would have spoilt her stepson Jim, but for his fund of good sense and good nature. She admired and liked men, but for girls and women she felt but little sympathy. Duty was her keystone. Tardily, and after years, and only now they had grown up, had this woman been able to transfer some of that severe affection that lived in her to these young women who called her mother. Yet,—after only two years of married life—when newly widowed, and with but small means, she willingly kept, nay insisted on the charge of the four orphans, despite pressing offers from the children's relatives, and by the time they began to earn money, she had well nigh spent on them every penny she had brought her husband.

Early on Wednesday, after hearing the heavy street-door shut behind the girls, and while it was still dark, Kirk prepared to dress and go down early to the works; but a severe sick feeling overcame him, so that for some time he sat on his bedside. A cold perspiration was followed by sensations of extreme heat. He unbuttoned his sleeping-jacket, and observed with astonishment a mass of red spots upon his chest. He returned to bed and waited until the day grew

light. Then he rang a little hand-bell with which Mrs. Gisburn had provided him.

"No! do not come in, Mrs. Gisburn!"

They spoke through the half-open door. He told Mrs. Gisburn his suspicion, and she sent for the doctor. A young medical assistant arrived in half an hour, for he lived close by and kept early Yorkshire hours; for the practice covered a wide area.

After examination, he raised his brows and smiled, saying, "You have measles! Mr. Clinton." . . . "No, we can't send you to a hospital, for we haven't one." . . . "Burndale? Oh no! no need to send him all that way."

"No, Mrs. Gisburn, you must hang a sheet over the door and keep it wet with a solution I'll send you directly. It's a big room, and you must put an old cloak on and off . . . no, better use one of those cotton overalls, Mrs. Gisburn—whenever you come in; and keep it hung up here. . . . If you do that, there's really very little risk, it's very rare in adults. I suppose Jim and the girls have all had it?"

"Yea! years ago, doctor."

"We have just had a big epidemic of measles, Mr. Clinton, and I think every child in the district has had the disease. There is practically none who has not had it. . . . Oh no, only two deaths, quite mild, extraordinarily mild. . . . Yes, it is annoying, at your age; it's quite rare in adults." "Oh! you were in Manchester? Well, they have it there, too. Yes . . . incubation may be quicker in the adult, I can't say."

So Kirk lay in bed for several days, and listened each evening to the hawker's melancholy bell. All night, at intervals, he heard the massive "lurry's" with their loads of woven wool or cotton grind pass over the setted roads, to the measured hoof-tramp of big horses. Very early each morning he heard Jim and the girls astir; he listened to them go down from their bedrooms. He heard the innumerable warning steam hooters and horns of the mills, echoing in

the cold black valleys at half-past five, and he listened to the harsh crescendo of hurrying clog-shod feet, outside, and heard them joined at a quarter to six by the light footsteps of Marian and Dinah.

He sent out for cheap paper-back novels and novelettes that could be burnt, and made acquaintance for the first time with some of the most widely popular authors of his own immediate day. He found the girls of this work-a-day village took pleasure in a profusion of shoddy dukes, colonels, viscounts and titled ladies; and many Hughs; while through the pages wandered or strode the strong-ever-upright and frequent Richard; and hard hearted villains schemed the horrible seductions of Gwennies and Veras, who were ever much-put-upon by cold and dashing high-bred dames and girls.

Kirk tried book after book. His extravagance distressed Mrs. Gisburn, and the news went forth from the little stationer's shop, that "This Mesther Clenton's a fair etter o' books!"

On the fifth evening, near six o'clock, and while sitting in a chair, he heard the girls and Jim come in. He listened to them drop off their clogs on the oilcloth of the large sitting-room, he knew they were putting on their slippers, and immediately after he heard all three come slowly up the stairs. Their bedroom doors closed behind them. He conjectured idly that the girls were brushing their hair, and Jim was washing. Presently he thought he had heard all three go downstairs, and then unexpectedly some one tapped on his door.

"Come in, Mrs. Gisburn!"

But Marian came in, a little way; then stood a moment, confused, blushing deeply, but smiling.

". . . I've brought you this," said she, holding out something in a piece of tissue paper. "I've cut it in two for you."

Kirk stood up, courteously made a step forward, and smiled as he took the proffered object.

"Thank you, Miss Butterworth, very much indeed."

Marian, very self-conscious, at once abruptly turned and left the room. She shut the door quickly behind herself. Her heart beat loudly as she went downstairs.

She had brought him an "Eccles Cake." It was a flat bun-like comestible, made of hard flaky paste. It contained a thick matted layer of currants. In the estimation of Marian it was one of the greatest delicacies one could enjoy. Kirk smiled to himself, he was much amused, but also rather touched by the kindness of the act.

"But how exceedingly indigestible!" thought he.

He sat down again and conjured up her form and appearance. He liked the rich pale hair, drawn smoothly back from the temples, and over—it seemed to him—her devoutly rounded head. That pale golden hair, coiled neatly in a big mass at the back of her neck gave the look of youth; that smooth full head gave the look of devotion—but, thought he, how oddly out of keeping with this was the heavy fringe, combed over the forehead!

"Yes, she has clear kind eyes; they were bluish. . . . I do wish she would not wear that fringe." He dismissed an idea that her lower face was heavy. . . . "Oh no"—mused he—"that was caused by the lamp on the little table, the light being lower than her face."

"She ought not to have come in here, it was very careless, and very kind, and funny." . . . "I shall have to eat it a bit at a time." . . . "I suspect she did this without the knowledge of her stepmother. . . ."

Kirk smiled to himself. He would tell the Lucys of this incident when next he wrote.

CHAPTER XXVI

ON the morning of his recovery Kirk set off for the works. To-day for once the land was not mistily hidden but lay absolutely bare to the view. As he walked he looked across a confluence of deep valleys. Long hills, dark of hue, devoid of tree or hedge, filled almost all the landscape. They rose at first steeply from the winding valleys, then went upward slower, and were capped by horizontal pikes and tors. In the ravine-like valleys and the deep side-cloughs were the black stone-built mills, the strong dingy houses, the winding railways, the countless narrow sky-reflecting reservoirs, the scanty sooted trees, and the hurrying polluted waters of the hills. The tops of tall chimneys or the smoke from them alone marked many an industrial group. Southward, the greater valley opened far away into flatter land, studded with a distant forest of big chimneys, overhung and shadowed by strata of sombre smoke.

Turning from this, Kirk looked away across the immense valley beneath him, and from left to right. "To reproduce the hue of all the lower slopes," thought Kirk, "one would use that crude green bice, a little pure black, and much raw umber—twenty square miles of cold, bleached, dirtied, blackish-green expanse in sight at once!" . . . "and almost every mile of it close netted with black stone walls!" Above this came the moorland. "Add burnt umber and more black, and you have the colour of the moorland"—thought Kirk. But on the summits lay long horizontal lines of pure-white snow. The skies all round for some little height above the hills showed a murkiness new to the eyes of Kirk. The edges of the distant plateaux were eaten into by many quar-

ries. Moving puffs of white steam told the observer of the distant busy cranes and little locomotives away across there on the hill-sides. Enormous screees of waste stone, blackish-yellow, could be descried tailing down from the working-level of these great quarries. Such scenery depressed Kirk far more than it would one having but an ordinary love of nature. To Kirk there seemed no escape—for he could see the whole land. There could be no discoveries of sweeter hidden places.

"This is a young civilisation, full of energy, full of newness, devoid of all ancient thought, learning, manners, harmony," thought Kirk, and he recollected that the ancient dying Cambria included this land he looked at.

"After that ended, there was nothing, until life began again only two hundred years ago!"—thought he.

He went down into the valley-bottom, entering a road that crossed the river. A few girls, their heads shawl-covered, were coming towards him from a mill. He halted on the bridge, looked across at his new works, and then glanced down at the river. A few large bushes overhung the banks and he noticed their lower branches were all festooned with long filthy rags, with things like bandages, and with lumps of oily cotton waste. These objects marked the level of the last flood. The dirty water that rushed through a wide bed of loose stones exhaled a strong sickly smell of dye-vats, and showed a tarry iridescence. At this moment Kirk felt some one pinch his calf! He turned quickly and two young girls stood back a pace and boldly looked at him from head to foot—with a most frank and kindly curiosity. Then one of them spoke slowly.

"Ee, lad! anna thee cowl i' them things?"

"Do you mean cold?" asked Kirk, much amused.

"Yi! *cowl*! . . . 'cowl'd,' if thee likes!"—and Kirk, smiling, replied innocently—

"Oh, no, puttees are much warmer than your things."

"Tha's never seen them, yoong fella!" quickly cried one,

laughing as they went away, and turning round to look at him the other shouted, "Tha'd lake to! ar'll bet!"

"Good heavens!" said Kirk, somewhat taken aback.

This was the last fine day for weeks. The low continuous canopy of heavy cloud remained unbroken. One seldom saw the pikes. A dark shadow clung day by day to the slopes and moorlands where they went up into the ever-moving clouds. It was too wet for outdoor work. Kirk's navvies made but three or four short days of earning in a week. Men came and asked for their wages, and left the works, seeking other places where the ground would not be all deep mud and sodden heavy clay, where there would be less rain, mist, sleet, ferocious wind and storm. Kirk daily spent hours in his rude office in the damp cottages. So much clay and earth had been tipped around them that now, from the windows, his eyes looked out on a level with the lumps of boulder-clay, that were liquefying beneath the rapid sequence of rain, sleet, dense mist, a few foggy hours of frost, and rain again.

Finding leisure, he worked on his Cirenhampton thesis until want of data caused him to desist. In company with Aikrigg, who proposed it, Kirk went through several large woollen mills, one cotton-mill, a print-works, a dye-works, and a velvet-mill, all near Bruside. The striking complex and genius, of highly organised machinery, evolved through generations, the great extent, the roar and trembling of it, gave food for thought. But the human life held imprisoned in the hot and foul air, in the smells and the tumult of roar—all these toiling girls and women, these pale half-naked spinners, these hurrying grease-bespattered children—impressed him most painfully and profoundly with a sense of utter wrongness.

"It's brackley* weather for ye, Mr. Clinton," said Mrs. Gisburn, many times in those weeks.

* Broken.

"But it's *nobbut* brackley weather up here i' winter," said Jim, laughing. "Farmer Ormerod as lives up o' top, he says it's nine months o' winter and three months o' cowl weather, i' Bruside parts, an' he's nigh reet!"

Jim persuaded Kirk to take a long walk with him on Saturday, despite the weather. They walked for miles up the deep and narrow winding valley; always on flagstones, and nearly always between the same kind of bare stone houses; and they passed mill after mill—gigantic six or seven-storey blocks overhanging the stone-setted road. Steam trams, jolting and rocking, trailing whiffs of sulphurous smoke and steam, overtook them or met them. To-day one saw the black mud full of oil and grease that half filled the reservoirs; for on Saturday, as Jim explained, "every mill runs th' lodge off to clean th' mood out."

"'Lodge?' Why, Jim, do you call them lodges?"

"Why! a' suppose because the watter *lodges* i' them!"

"What a horrible smell the cleaning-out process does make!"

"Does it?" asked Jimmie, sniffing the air. "Now a' nevva norticed it before! but tha't right, Mr. Clinton; I guess our folk gets used t' onything! . . . Hast read 'Merrie England'?"

"Yes, while I had the measles; was that your copy? I'm afraid I burnt it, Jim."

"Never menshun it! t' only cost a bob. Ar've read it. There's soom sense in it?"

"It impressed me, Jim; it's exceedingly sad, because I'm not sure that things can be altered, not in our time."

"Nay? . . . Look o' yon mill-door! ee! and on th' manager's door! What's yon chalked up, Mr. Clinton?"

"Read 'The Clarion'!" "Read 'Merrie England'!" said Kirk. "Do you think, Jim, that those ideas are spreading?"

"Ay I don't say so! tha' knows. . . . Look a' yon fou smell . . . ar nevva norticed it! not till thee sed, and I'm

not as rough as some, nay, as most! . . . it's our girls . . . a' don't like them going to mill. But we've no munney—nobbut what we addles wi' ar hands! . . . If a'd geeten brass, I'd nōne let my sisters go to mill . . . tho' they're well-off, war they are. Th' best lot of gurls i' valley waves at Sootcliffe's.* They're none a bit like yon rough wenches that pinched thee leg down i' Carrbottom, Mr. Clinton; Sootcliffe 'ull not tek ony lass or lad as coomes along, not i' his cotton-mill; and our gurl's reet glad it is so."

"So am I, Jim."

"There's soom sense i' 'Merrie England.' . . . Tho' it'll coom to nobbut wind-a-watter . . . i' these parts. Th' Organist at Hephthwaite, Mr. Martineau, told me years sin I wur a-bit-ov-a-philosopher, an' a' rekkon a' am that! . . . Ar've read soom! But a' thinks nowt o' yon shoutin I.L.P.—That lot's never done a day's wark i' their lives. They'll coot down th' hard warker, and rerse oop t'lerzy t' share his meat and wage . . . tha'll see it i' thy life, Mr. Clinton. Yon's what'll happen . . . mayhap . . ."

All the people stared hard at Kirk. Rough children shouted loudly into open doorways—to other youngsters,—“Ee! coom-a-look-a-yon-felly!!” “Sithee! yon mon's foony ligs!!”

“It seems to me we could return across the moors, Jim, and get out of this shut-in trough? and all these personal attentions?”

“Currect! Then we'd better get-a-agate now, up Maden's cable-road, but it's proper windy and wild, ovver th' tops!”

“Oh! I shall like that! Don't you prefer it, Jim?”

“It's livelier i' the bottoms than on th' hills, but tha'll see.”

It was a long climb up, but here the air was fresh, and the wind whistled through the loose black walls. Stiles there were none. Strong slabs projected like steps from the walls. One stepped up the slabs, stood on the wall, and walked down the other side. A few stone-chats, flitting from heap to heap in

* Waves = weaves.

the immense stony waste of old quarries, were seen by Kirk as he ascended.

Then he and Jim crossed some miles of black moor, grown thickly with deep ling, but so black and sooty was it that Kirk's khaki puttees were soon soiled to the knees. A few frightened pipits flew up cheeping shrilly, and were carried away by the fierce wind that rushed on unchecked over the sea of black hills. The sky, as usual, was wholly grey. Kirk and Jim neared the snow that lay in a wide curve behind the north face of one of those long-backed pikes—and Kirk found with regret that even this was not as he had thought; for the deep snow was grimed thick with a sooty crust—from smoke carried sixteen hundred feet above the valleys. To himself he was thinking, "All is defaced, all is disfigured by mankind, everything is spoilt; how am I to live here?"

CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT was the cause direct of his disturbance? Why should he experience this serious repugnance to his work in life? Why feel so deep a pity for these people? Why no longer was he happy? Why should he feel the sustenance of his soul cut off? The answer seemed to be:—his dreams, mostly his dreams; and add to those his youth, his temperament, his fate.

From childhood he had avoided that unbroken intercourse with human beings, so needful to the great majority. Every hour and day in which he could escape material life he had spent in reading no ordinary books. He had nurtured a great passion for the out-of-doors. He had strongly fostered and created round his soul and mind, as it were a vast nimbus of vivid-lighted thought—concerned but little with material man—a coloured aura of dreams and lovely sounds. In this he lived.

He had for years bathed himself in the pure silences and rustlings of the grass and wind. For hours, lying in places silent and removed, he had gazed vertically into that blue nothingness that lies beyond transparent summer clouds, seeking and seeking to realise the mystery of space. There, too, he had absorbed the "Earthly Paradise," and gathered fastidiously, only where he willed, among the verse of Burns and Herrick, Keats and Shelley, Hafiz and Schiller, Coleridge, Chaucer and the old Reliques of Percy—many poets; and he had pondered like a seer himself, over the transcendent noble thought of Emerson.

He had for years gone forth into the fields at evening, to breathe-in the first perfume of the woods, the earliest incense

of the hawthorn bloom. He went forth to stand and dream in places become sacred by his own thoughts, to look and look into sunsets, to kneel with shut eyes, and let the last bliss of the descending lark possess his soul,—and tears, sometimes, had filled his eyes; so touching, so inexpressible, were these miracles. And, as his power increased of living solely in beauty and the spirit, came a strong aspiration that he might receive the gift of Richard Jefferies.

It seemed the poet and himself alone had ever known this secret ravishment; they two alone of all spirits had ever had this power of transmutation of the consciousness, so that, at times, they could slip from and escape the human, be drawn within Nature, and live her wondrous raptures, even in dews and fragrances, in light caught trembling in the cups of glowing golden flowers.

Imaginatively, Kirk had often felt near him with intense love, the very spirit of that elder brother, whom he had known but through his written words; and, silently, he had adjured him, while in his own country side:—

“Speak again! through me! inspire *me!* and I will write that which you began to know.”

At Cirenhampton all these feelings had reached a climax. Driven on as it were, he had tried to write of these entrancements, always as he wrote excluding even the faintest reference to material life, and always he finished in dejection. Yet he had filled many little pencilled books with curious thought.

But now, the crude realities of northern life, the darkness of human impotence, the awakening of sex, began to strike into his beauteous fabric with heavy shafts of black and red.

The departure and separation from the South weighed upon him like a heavy grief, seldom remitting. From this uncommon state of mind he viewed this new land and life and people. He judged them solely by his own feelings, not seeing that they felt no bitter cold, as did he. They missed no sun-

shine. Rain and cloud unbroken were unnoticed of them. The black, bleak, and wild naked landscape sent no chill to their souls. From infancy, they had seen no other. He judged these people, and felt a great pity for them, unknowing that what was to almost all of them but natural irksomeness, hard work, necessity unavoidable, a second nature, appeared to himself severe, hard, cruelly toilsome, utterly soul-destroying, terrible.

That evening in his bedroom he picked up a long letter unfinished, written to Mary. In his own words he found a painful interest. How vividly true were they! Mary had asked him to describe Bruside.

"All night the heavy lorries carrying loads that weigh up to seven tons strain up the rising street of Bruside, over the setted road, between the silent houses. Fine heavy horses—better cared for than the human beings—pull together steadily in fours and sixes without sound of whip or voice; the house trembles with the vibration of the heavy wheels, as though siege guns were passing through at night in time of war. These great loads, Mary, are the woven cloth, the spun wool and cotton, the finished day's work of many, many, many wearied men and women, and the loads were all going to Manchester, thirty-two miles away. When I heard the first foot-falls of the work-people pass at five o'clock yesterday morning, I got out of bed and looked. The moon was shining and setting in the West, and seemed to fill the stony street with a cold bright light, and the wind sighed in the crowded telegraph wires. At five o'clock, and again at five-thirty, a hundred waiting mills from near and far gave tongue through their steam hooters, blaring their relentless summons:—

"'Get up! Get ready! Morning again! There is no escape! The day's toil starts for you!'

"And yet the sky was all stars and night-smoke.

"The number of people going to work steadily increased in volume. This was the infantry of commerce; battalions, regiments, brigades, passing to the fighting line.

"All these people wore wooden iron-shod clogs. They tramped along the flagged pavements or ran on the hard stone-paved road. Women and girls nearly all had their heads shrouded in grey and black shawls; a few girls wore straw sailor-hats, and all carried food in little baskets, handkerchiefs, or oval tin boxes. I watched them in the moonlight, till I shivered with cold. I see now why they are Socialists. For half an hour the hollow street of stone houses, stone flag fences, and stone underfoot, echoed with the clatter of the clogs. Long strides of men; quicker, shorter, lighter steps of women, girls and children. At last the wide foot-paths were insufficient, and the roadway was half-filled with hurrying human beings—from whom broke scarce a word, and no laughter. One hundred were going to that mill, three hundred to that, a thousand to that big one lit up inside with countless lights.

"And now many began to run as the stream thinned rapidly, the hooters blared again, and filled all the night-covered valleys with their echoes, that died away at last over the black moors; and then the street suddenly fell silent. Steam was fully up.

"Thickset overlookers and managers count the last men, women, girls and children as they pass through the narrow picket-door, into the brilliant artificial light, and into the exceedingly hot atmosphere that smells, Mary, of grease, cotton, fermented size, unbathed human bodies, and clothes spotted with oil. . . . For who of these, Mary, has time, energy and opportunity to bathe all over, between four and five each wintry morning? And who can wear fresh clothes each day?

"The roving-frame girls, the carders and spinners, go to their eighty-degree rooms. The overlookers stand there to check and number, nearly all are in their places; scowls and roughest abuse are often given to those who are late. The hands of the clock have come to the hour of six. The engine-drivers in a thousand mills are pulling over their levers. The

mighty humming of the West Riding re-commences. At this moment in the enormous and almost silent weaving sheds, fifty shuttles begin flying swiftly, then with a crescendo of roar the rest join in, the 'heels' go up and down, the web parts and shuts for the speeding steel and boxwood, the 'pickers' deftly catch and throw, the 'sled' swings in rapid harmony, the weavers stoop and walk and turn between their looms. So great is the noise, Mary, that shout your loudest and it will carry not three feet! and when you emerge after but a few minutes in this uproar, you will be unable for hours to rid your ears of the tumult in them; but these people spend their childhood in it, and they grow up and grow old in it.

"The race is small of stature, and grows smaller.

"Three quarters of the elderly weavers look moderately well; the other quarter look deathly, both physically and mentally. The former are the non-ideal folk, those who are not imaginative. The emotional and imaginative are those who first go under, they are unfitted for the heavy toil. They are unfitted to endure the noise and the monotony—in two and a half hours one has only come to half-past eight in the morning—they cannot endure the long standing, the close confinement, the heat. In severest frost it is hot inside the mill—they fade and wither in the greasy dust, the lack of air, the ten-hour day, in reality the day of thirteen hours: for, you see, Mary, that they are really occupied with thought of toil from five in the morning till six o'clock at night. Oh, Mary dear, you don't know how utterly heart-rending it is at times, to me—to look on at this, and its effects, especially on the poor girls; and some are still so pretty and pure. It is ruining our race, here. Nearly all the girls get varicose veins by the time they are twenty-six or so.

"God help the naturally idle, the unhandy, until they are cured. But God indeed help the ideally pure-minded, for there are some here. They daily hear obscenity, they are bullied by overseers, sometimes until they commit suicide, so I

am told; and even their modesty has not been considered, about here, by those who built the mills I have been into; for ranges of conveniences for the girls and women stand exposed closely to the gaze of men."

CHAPTER XXVIII

WITH this family Kirk lived very formally. He treated these young women courteously, reservedly, respectfully,—as markedly separate beings from himself—but yet with much unconscious sympathy and intuition, just as he treated all women. The novelty of the present position appealed to his youthful curiosity for event.

Soon they had asked him to use their Christian names to avoid the excessive repetition of “Miss Butterworth,” and, after the first shy hesitation, he grew used to it. But they addressed him by his surname; to them he was still Mr. Clinton, or “he.”

When at last he noticed the old lady habitually gave himself and Jim every *bon bouche* of the dishes, he objected politely and with secret amusement, but without avail. He waited several days; then by a personal, sudden and decisive order to Ruth he had the joint put opposite himself.

“Mrs. Gisburn,” firmly remarked Kirk, with a keen eye upon her as he stood up to carve, “I cannot let you carve any more while I sit and look on: I always carved for my mother when the occasion arose,—when my father and my elder brother were absent—and I know you will always let me do so here, in the future; and I presume you, Jim, have no objection?”

“Nay! ar’ve no objection, Mr. Clinton,” quickly said Jim, concealing his delight.

A little flattered, and for once in her life undecided, Mrs. Gisburn began to speak, but Kirk broke in calmly,

“So we will do it to-day, and to-morrow, Ruth, and in the

future your mother wishes you always to put the meat before me."

Mrs. Gisburn, nonplussed, glanced with disapproval round the table. Jim, and Dinah whom he had pinched quietly, hid their mirth, Marian was smiling slightly, thinking that Kirk did not know her stepmother; and Kirk and Ruth were quite grave. But Mrs. Gisburn had given way, and later Marian exclaimed to Kirk,

"It's the first time, Mr. Clinton, since the world began!"

Kirk carved in future, dealing forth the viands with a fine discriminating fairness under those pairs of eyes that closely watched each portion.

The same evening Ruth asked him to read them something from his books. Marian had persuaded Ruth to this request. "You ask him, Ruth, he likes you best, I'd love to hear him read like he talks . . . isn't his voice sweet?"

Nothing loth, indeed very pleased, and glad to see the girls allowed for once to sit and rest a brief space before their early bed-time, Kirk went into the best sitting-room, and there selected from his rows of books a Tennyson. As he turned over the leaves his eyes lit on the words "Enoch and Annie, sitting hand in hand." He stood a moment, held by some inarticulate thought. Then, in more material mood, he said, "Enoch *with* Annie, sitting hand in hand!" His mother had read this poem to him, sitting near the sea at Abermawr the summer before she died. He knew that he inherited her powers of voice. With finger in the book he returned to the living room. He sat down in a chair placed ready for him in the family circle round the fire. All their eyes were upon him. He paused, and then began to read Enoch Arden with a new interest, a new insight which he never before had felt.

Throughout the long poem he was more conscious of Ruth and Marian than the others. They only, thought he, will appreciate and feel.

As he closed the book he saw that Jim and Dinah had not

kept awake, and that their faces looked worn and tired even in sleep. Ruth, Marian, and Mrs. Gisburn had however intently listened. They sat still and silent after Kirk finished the poem. Then Marian slowly stood up and said in a low voice, "Good night, mother"—and went upstairs. Kirk saw they were affected, and, also, greatly tired. He blamed himself for keeping them up till so late an hour. The looms had been run all the week at top speed to try and recover in advance the approaching Christmas Day, the meagre cessation from toil which this old-time glad season brought to these girls. On account of the bad weather Kirk's Bruside works would be closed a week.

As this first Christmas in the North approached, Kirk became filled with a great overcoming passion like that of the absent lover, again to see, speak with, and clasp in his arms the beloved.

He wrote no word to friend or relative, made the journey to the South, and Christmas Day found him solitary on a Cirenhampton heath.

He stood once more entranced, looking with deep affection at the distant downs, at the dark firs, over the sea of brown bare trees even now reddening to the coming year. The immense beautiful sky was open, unsullied, illimitable. Bright sunlight fell on the preparing gorse bloom, and Kirk knelt and bent forward that he might take the remembered sweetness of these first lowly yellow flowers. And then, carried to him and beyond him, on the ever-pure beloved air, came one faultless delicious fluting of a blackbird, so trembling with joy unutterable, that, as it were, the most ethereal chords of his imagination suddenly were swept by heavenly music.

But coming to himself his soul was suddenly wrenched against his will back to that daily life which re-awaited him, in that dark sunless northland, in the befouled ways of men to which he must return. But he stood up and thrust it all away.

He walked on towards the distant downs, where sun-lit cloud-ranges, seemingly motionless, approached from an immensity of distance.

Full of calm and peace he returned in darkness to a large old-fashioned inn, and there changed his clothes, transferring his notebook into the pocket of his dinner-jacket. He dined in a bright room, from the ceiling of which hung the mistle-toe. A faint aromatic smell of fir and yew came from the evergreen garlands hung above the doors and the pictures. The cheery glow from a huge fireplace trebled the redness in the polished holly.

After dinner, and after overcoming a considerable shyness that he felt, he put on his overcoat and soon passed quickly along the almost silent street, lit by many cosy, festive windows. He left the town behind and at length rang the bell under the ancient portico of Cloud Agnell.

"Mr. Clinton, isn't it, Sir?" said William, admitting him.

"Yes. . . . I happened to be in Cirenhampton this evening. Have you any one here, William? Are they all at home? I shall not come in if you have guests."

"No, Sir, there's no one here to-night, except young Master Wilfred home from school, and Miss Beatrice. I'll take your card in, Sir."

"All right."

Mr. Lucy came quickly down the hall exclaiming, "My dear Clinton! Welcome! We're delighted! And a Merry Christmas! Where *have* you come from?"

In the drawing-room Kirk received a warm welcome, but was much upbraided for keeping his visit to himself.

"Oh! how odd men are! and especially you!" said Mrs. Lucy, laughing as she re-entered the room. She had just hospitably arranged that Kirk should sleep beneath her roof; and without consulting him she had sent for his portmanteau, saying to the groom—"Take the tub, and bring all his things.

Tell them, from me, that Mr. Clinton will call in to-morrow."

Presently they listened to Kirk's description of his new environment and asked him many questions; and at last he told them how it oppressed him, and how he could not resist rushing to the South.

"But it is the place to make money in," said Mr. Lucy, echoing Brough's words—"and you have your love of books, Clinton, your many interests, you know, to relieve you; . . . and where have you been to-day?"

Kirk told them. His mention of Litchdown led Mr. Lucy into story and legend of the hamlet; he spoke of the name—

"'Litch' is Saxon and means a grave or body, thus 'Litch-down'—where those seven barrows are that you saw to-day. . . . I opened one of them for Lord Laymead, but we found only a few flints, and one bronze fibula; no other sign of any interment: no ashes, no bones."

Mrs. Lucy believed Kirk loved music far more than archæology, and she turned to her daughter—

"Beata, will you get your fiddle? and we'll have some music."

"I suppose you've not heard much music since you left us, Mr. Clinton?"

"No indeed, only one man, an organist at a parish church some miles from me, who plays Heller.—I should love some music!"

"I thought you would . . . really! But Heller? How strange! down there."

"Yes, he interprets so differently—even the quite small and simple compositions—I know of no one else who can play Heller. I had no idea before that Heller was great. But this man who plays Heller is not a Yorkshireman. His name is Martineau, rather French, isn't it?—he is very bookish . . . like I am," and Kirk smiled at his hostess.

". . . How are the nature notes going on, Clinton?" asked Mr. Lucy, with a remembered interest.

"I haven't done much more. . . . I could hardly write a

bit to-day . . . and—to-night, it is too beautiful—here—after being away so long—but I shall try and write when I get back, and have thought of it all.”

“I tell him, dear”—Mr. Lucy was speaking to his wife—“he need never starve! he can always earn his living with his pen!”

Kirk longed to pull out his little book and read them his words written before dinner, but he was too shy, it seemed such a vanity; and perhaps it would sound all silly when read; and besides, Beatrice prepared to play to them. Mrs. Lucy seated at the piano smoothed the pages of Debussy, and Kirk lay back luxuriously in his chair.

Beatrice, now a girl of twenty, was indeed very pretty. She and Kirk had felt always at ease each with the other, and to-night, before her music carried him quite away, he lay back and admired her, with that Quixotic, reverent, honourable and tender feeling ever evoked in him by the near presence of pure, beautiful women. She was a tall girl, and her rather slight form was very graceful and virginal. Youth, freshness and sweetness, permeated her being even as fragrant scent fills the air round the earliest violets. When she rested her cheek against the violin Kirk watched her, and he thought impersonally, as an artist might have done, of how beautiful she would be, standing affectionately touching her lover when he came—for surely enough he would come. Her dark, absorbed, shining eyes, looking down towards the fire-light, the almost imperceptible and rhythmic movement of her youthful form, her passionately sweet music, caused Kirk to lower his eyes, and exclaim in secret,—“Oh God, how spiritual and exquisite are thy women!”

In this same mood, he looked at her again, and their eyes met.

On retiring, he sat by the fire in his great Elizabethan bedroom and thought of Mr. Lucy's words—“He can always earn his living with his pen.”

For a few minutes the expression filled him with hope, his

dream of writing had been present with him all day: he became conscious that during these years past he had been waiting for and expecting some kind of inspiration, some kind of illumination that would be shed upon him. He became aware that these strong but inarticulate longings were always towards something in the future, something unfulfilled. There seemed to be some great barrier along which he had always been wandering—while he looked beyond, into the future, with expectant waiting eyes. Never had he been overcome by so great a repugnance as he now felt towards the ordinary life and men, towards his profession and the coarseness of engineering, of uncouth human beings, of talk of money, of prices of concrete. The quiet clean earth upturned, befouled and trodden; the ugly grimy shapes in bricks and steel; the captive, herd-like, swinish, pushing, shoving and dirty jostling and running to and fro of men—solely to get food and clothes and shelter—all such was become abhorrent to him, as would be the fouled air and denizens in the centre of a modern city to one of those who dwelt with old Cheiron, amid the mountain-woods and rocks and sparkling falling waters of ancient Pelion.

Thinking to-night, Kirk perceived that the mass of human beings, or, rather, of *men*, were almost submerged and were swimming hard for dirty little life—in this glutinous stream of mud and sewage. He pictured them clambering on one another—here and there one filthy little human crawling on a semi-buried mass of his struggling fellows.—“That one, I suppose!”—apostrophised he—“is a dirty, dishonourable, cunning, successful politician or man of business!”—“And am I too one of those wretched little creatures? Are we steadily becoming a race of social blow-flies and carnivorous ants?”

A strange dissatisfaction with his beloved goddess Nature, a grievous gust of knowledge, swept through him. This was the knowledge of the cruel pitiless strife of flowers with flowers, and trees with trees.

He thought, with grief and revulsion, of that hideous preying one upon the other of fragile insects, and dainty liquid-eyed birds.

Ah! . . . for all these years it had been hidden from him under their beauty and their glamour. He stood up in pain, wishing passionately that he had lived before the times of Darwin—Nay! Thousands of years ago! Yes, it seemed as if he had concealed it from himself, with fear, these last few years; but it was true, too true—bitterly thought he. Ah! if one could leave it all, all, and dwell in deep pure space.

. . . But *women* were good. . . . Like their forms and faces they were wholly finer in both grace and texture—and so incomparably purer, sweeter, and gentler, gentler and more spiritual than man!

His thoughts returned to the North. Again he heard the footsteps going down the staircase in the winter dark and cold, while inside the house the arctic draught shrilled and mourned through every door and crevice, and outside, the sleet beat fitfully against his bedroom window, hurled against it by the bitter wind that howled through the mass of telegraph wires, shook the houses by its savage rush, and filled the dark road with driven grit and fierce piercing eddies—the while those poor girls at Bruside should still have remained for hours longer in their beds. Only three mornings ago he had jumped out of his warm coverings and caught a glimpse in the chill moonlight, of Marian's young figure closely drawn about with her dark shawl, as fearful of being late she hurried off nervously to the mill.

In two months Kirk had seen something of that horrible factory life. He knew now the existence led by those girls. He had lived in their home for two months. After reading *Enoch Arden* to them, that night, he had been restless, unable to sleep as well as he did usually, and a great pity and a feverishness to help them grew in him. Especially did he feel pity for Marian, for, though she looked robust, he di-

vined correctly that she was not, and further, he imagined she felt the same aversion to her work that he now experienced to his own. He fancied Marian felt her position more keenly than did her sisters. "Yes," thought he again, to-night, "she is more emotional and more sensitive than I first thought. Juxtaposition with those coarse over-lookers and plebeian men must daily hurt the girl to the heart."

And sitting in this old charming fire-lit bed-room, in the peace and warmth of this choice home in the South, Kirk vividly recalled those dark and distant hills, the roaring of machinery, the smell of mills, the polluted rivers, the ugliness, the stunted race, the toil unceasing. The injustice of these differences revolted him. Why should those girls—and Marian still so youthful, so unspoilt, so affectionate and pure—be harassed from day to day, from year to year, from childhood to miserable old age, to get a hand-to-mouth existence, while, during the same years, Beatrice was born into this sweet old home and dear cared-for life?

While he was thus thinking Beatrice, partly undressed in her own room, went to a long mirror and gazed a few moments at her own reflection. Then she changed her attitude—smiled slightly—and then smiled the more at her own face and smile. But growing thoughtful she stood motionless and looked down, and saw her own pretty feet. She was thinking:—"He is only like a brother . . . that's all he thinks of poor me! . . . He's not cold; but oh so separate! . . . I know him not a bit! Nor he me!" . . . "Silly!" said she aloud to herself, and glanced over herself, and then left the mirror, and whistled a little sad refrain diminuendo, as she moved about.

CHAPTER XXIX

KIRK spent the next two days among the old sand and gravel pits round Cirenhampton, deciding percentages of different flint, stone, and quartzite pebbles. Very early on the fourth day he left for Cheltenham. There he found Ted looking well and happy, and in high spirits. Despite refusal in two successive years Ted now had won the day. He was newly betrothed. The brothers walked to "Nithsdale," the home of Ted's fiancée, and there spent a most happy time. Her father, Robert Mackenzie, was a bishop or "Angel" in the Apostolic Church. Born at Dundee he took his M.A. at St. Andrew's. Later he went to London and became a barrister, and, prior to entering the church, he had for years been successful at Edinburgh, as an advocate.

He was a short man, of strong and heavy build. His immense leonine head was well set on broad shoulders and a bull neck. He forthwith impressed one. The blue twinkling sparkling eyes, the deep little lines radiating from their corners and ever-ready for mirth, the shaggy brows, great nose, chestnut luxuriant hair, the grand face—clearly marked a Jupiterian rather than a man of law. His quick speech, alert action, forceful gesture, told instantly of directness and energy. He was father of ten children. Jean, his third, was now engaged to Ted. She was a girl tall, handsome, and refined. Her dark and thick hair, fine nose, snowy neck and gray intelligent eyes attracted the repeated quiet scrutiny of Kirk. From these beautiful intellectual eyes it seemed to him she looked out with cheerfulness, with a conscious practical ability, a calm judgment, a serene good nature, and a fixity of faith. He judged her correctly, but Jean also inherited her father's energy and humour, only in her these traits

were far more latent. She was not demonstrative. Her mother gave the greater influence. Beneath everything flowed always, as it were, a strong current. Jean possessed a large-hearted irony and force of character, keen observation and remembrance—giving her a dual and secret mental life entirely unsuspected even by her family.

It rained, and after lunch Mackenzie carried Kirk off to play with him upon a somewhat battered billiard table. Seven young folk in one house gave this table but little rest. Not quite large enough, the room required the use of a dumpy little cue for top-end-strokes; and Kirk, greatly enlivened by his host, frequently avoided this cue by what he called "engineering shots." Mackenzie, nothing if not enthusiastic, each time danced a moment, stood motionless, and exhorted Kirk—"Go on! Go on! Weel! Weel! ingenious canthrip! Hech! hech! Man! *Man!!* Ye'll nevvrr do it!!"—And more than once Kirk attempted eccentricities just to excite his host and hear the Scottish accent at its best. Between strokes they talked much of books, experience, and people. Before five o'clock it occurred to Kirk that he had told Mr. Mackenzie a great deal about himself, and his thoughts.

"Mither! Ye behold just two vary, *vary learrned* men, in me and the Kirrrkpatrick!" was a statement made at tea time and received with great laughter.

Late that evening in his rooms, Ted recounted to Kirk all his long love-affair. He was now intensely eager and hopeful of progress in his business, so that he might marry. He was very anxious about this.

"If I had not been in the Church, Kirk, her father would never have given his consent, for my salary is so poor at present, and they are well off, but then too" (Ted smiled) "I had her dear Mother upon my side." Ted paused as he thought of Jean, then turned to Kirk with a lit face and exclaimed—

"Kikkie, she's the *truest* woman I ever met!"

"I like her, Ted, very much indeed; even I can see she is no ordinary girl. She's very handsome . . . beautiful."

Ted put his hand on his brother's knee. "Kikkie, old man, you don't know what a severe thing it is to be in love. You have no idea! not in the least! When she refused me the last time—you know that frightful hill just beyond Savernake?—well, I rode down that too fast in any case that day, but my handle-bars came out and I didn't care in the least; I thought it was death and I was glad. I sat steady, waiting, but somehow the blessed machine went on itself! and up the other side! and stopped.

"I told her about it the other day. I've had such a . . . an awfully trying time, these last few years, and you know it kept me from doing just what I wanted to do, I mean it prevented me doing my work as well, and being as keen in it—but I could only think of her; and when she refused me the second time I could not have gone on, if it had not been for the Church. I know you're different, Kirk . . . about the Church . . . it's your pride of intellect." Ted spoke on questioningly and wonderingly. "But what Mother could believe, surely you can believe . . . ?

". . . And then a month ago I felt Jean had changed towards me, and her mother smiled at me one day, after Church, in a way I understood; so I arranged to ask Jean once more."

Ted laughed to himself.

"It was not like other times. I didn't feel stupid, besides, I knew Angus Duncan had asked her and been refused—
young Rob told me—"

"Which one is that, the youngest brother?"

"Yes, so I gave him a new fly-rod on condition he was to take her out in a boat, row her up to Larn Bridge, and I was to be there, Kikkie (all unbeknown, you bet!), and Rob was to insist on picking me up, etc.! I'll tell you. So I got in. We went on, me in the bow, and we left the boat at Alderford,

and Rob, the young beggar, pretended he'd not fastened the boat up properly, and went back. He left her to me for ten minutes, and I felt not a bit nervous. You've no idea what a fool I must have seemed the other times! but this time I said to her—

“‘Jean, why did you refuse poor Angus Duncan?’ and she walked faster, and I said, ‘Jean, I love you so strongly, that I insist on speaking to you again, and if you’ll marry me I’ll *make* you love me.’ . . . I said something else . . . I’ve forgotten . . . and asked her again, ‘Why did you refuse Angus?’ . . . and then I saw her cheek sideways and she was smiling as if she were awfully amused and then what do you think she replied, very low, Kirk?” Ted’s eyes shone with his intent vision. “She said, ‘Because I love *you*!’ So I kissed her, and she let me, bless her, and then I kissed her four times.

“And young Jim told them at table that he had brought us together! and was offended because they wouldn’t take him seriously. Oh how her father did laugh!”

“Kirk!” shouted Ted, laughing, and jumping up from sheer high spirits, “and now she loves me! *me!* your old stupid Ted!” and he caught violently hold of Kirk (also laughing) and they did a prodigious hop-waltz round Ted’s room, upsetting chairs and a small table of books—and some one knocked sharply at the door. The female voice of one highly aggrieved called through the door—

“Was you wanting anything, Mr. Clinton?”

“Oh no, Mrs. Jones! it’s all right! don’t be afraid!” cried Ted. “I’ve just been explaining a little engineering problem to my brother, you know—thank you—good night, Mrs. Jones—Good night!”

“Oh, you shocking liar, Ted! Well, you make me marvel!”

“Wait till *you* fall in love, Kikkie!” said Ted, with exultation. “It runs in the family, the old man fairly stormed Mother, so Aunt Athorpe says. Fairly carried her off by force from some other fellow, I believe.”

"Yes, he did love *her* . . . and no one else," said Kirk.

The two brothers parted next evening. Kirk changed trains at Bristol, and there was an hour between arrival and departure. He left the station quickly to do something for which he had not found opportunity in Cheltenham. Fruit was scarce and poor in the North, but here he bought four large bunches of splendid purple-black grapes and he took them, carefully packed, to the station. He placed them on the middle of the carriage seat to prevent their being jarred. Their possession gave him a warm gratification. Now he was in the train the return to Bruside did not seem so distasteful as he had imagined it would be. He was somewhat aware of a slight sense of unfaithfulness to his beloved South, but he did not analyse his feelings. He thought of Ted, and of Jean. . . .

"Very fine-looking, beautiful and good, a rich nature, a lovely body in keeping, a rather noble face. . . . Ted's very fortunate . . . but I would never have fallen in love with her, nor she with me. She is too religious, too conventional, too . . . I don't know what."

He well knew himself to be different somehow from others . . . and he fell asleep in his solitary corner wondering vaguely why he was different—and the train roared on through Worcestershire and past his old home.

At half-past six next morning, in pitchy darkness and a heavy mist and dense rain, he arrived at Bruside. He walked up the long hill-road. Only Mrs. Gisburn was in the house. She smiled at him as he entered the gas-lit room.

"Ay, Mr. Clinton! I'm glad to see ye! it's seemed so dead and lone-like, without ye! Gurls was sorry ye went away for Christmas, but I told them—'Nay! he mun see his own folk, gurls.' "

Kirk shook her hand, then at once began to open the box of grapes before he took off his dripping overcoat, but she stopped him, and helped him take off his coat. She carried it away and returned, saying:

"Ruth's just put her shawl on and gone to Ackroyd's to get some eggs. Now ye must be wet and cowl and ye look quite neshed! and ye'll have something to eat at once?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you, Mrs. Gisburn," said Kirk, adding: "Will you bring me a big dish? I've brought some grapes for the girls."

When Mrs. Gisburn saw the pile of luscious fruit she was quite shocked.

"Mesther Clinton! Mesther Clinton! Ye mustn't go spending your munney like that agen, and on our gurls!"

"Good heavens! Why, it's nothing, Mrs. Gisburn! But do you think they will *like them*? We can send some to the mill for their breakfast, can't we?"

"Like them? Ay indeed, they'll weel like them, but ye'd no right to go wasting your munney, Mr. Clinton. Dinah and Marian's often bothered me to get them grapes i' summertime. They do say the mill's ovver-waarm all the year for etting in, though I've never been to mill mysel', for my folk had a good business . . . Ay, I've never seen such grapes!" then she continued in a softer voice, "I'm sure it's varry kind of ye, Mr. Clinton, to bring them, they've come from South?"

"Yes, they were grown in Devon—so they said—now let us make up three equal shares, I'm sure Jim will like them too, will you cut them up, Mrs. Gisburn?" He was removing his wet boots.

Mrs. Gisburn gingerly handling her scissors parsimoniously cut a few grapes from a single bunch.

"Oh, far, far more than those! one minute, Mrs. Gisburn! shall I do it? Yes, let me do it!"

He ran upstairs, hastily washed his hands, then came down and made up three goodly half bunches.

"There! send those!" said he smiling.

"They'll be fair surprised and pleased," said Mrs. Gisburn. "Ee! Dinah will fair felly wi' them!" said she with a hard smile, overcoming her scruples of propriety and thrift, and catching Kirk's enthusiasm.

“ ‘Felly?’ ” laughed Kirk. “What does ‘*felly*’ mean?”

“Proud-like, y’r know, ovver t’other gurls. It’ll be first time grapes like these have ever been etten i’ yon mill; I don’t know what folks’ll say to me.”

“What . . . ? . . . Mrs. Gisburn, believe me, you should never care in even the *slightest* degree, what others say of you!”

Glowing with the romantic idiocy of inexperienced youth, Kirk wrote on a bit of paper, “From K. Clinton,” and at eight o’clock he saw the breakfast basket leave for the mill.

CHAPTER XXX

KIRK began to lose his first keen aversion to the rough and bleak scenery of Bruside. For his was that type of mind which imagines always the living figure in the hewn marble—that type which, while young, cannot long remain unaffectionate, even to trees, things, places, walls and houses. These people are like those plants which, after being torn up by the roots, always have power, after a long pause, to put forth again the live leaves—the same kind of leaves—from the merest dry roots. Kirk's letters to Mary dwelt less and less on the hideousness of mills. He had found the beloved faithful spring forgot not the north-country. He had discovered and daily appreciated that Bruside was far better off than all those narrow town-filled valleys—so squalid, crowded, and polluted—that lay as it were sunk around Bruside. Up here they had the moors and the people of the moors—Celtic-minded and romantic to-day up to the very limit their hard commercial lives permitted them.

Upon a still and mild evening, early in April, Kirk stood among the sisters and beside the brother, on the flagged space before their house. Kirk long had appreciated the sensibility of the unknown man who built this house—the man who set its face towards the open distance.

It was sunset and the light died far away over the distant moorlands. From the house front the land sloped away quickly through many little stone-walled fields, down into the deep hazy valley. The wonted lines of white unmelted snow, which for so many cold and stormy months had lain behind the distant netting of black stone walls—had now like magic faded and vanished in these first warm days.

Doors and windows for hours had stood wide open. The evening drew in slowly. Lonely thrushes sang in the distant little woods that sheltered in the cloughs and deeper folds, and it was the "sweeling-time."

The boys of the few moorland farms were this evening at sundown burning off the coarse herbage, long dead and snow-bleached. The dead growth would have hindered the young blades from pushing upwards. This burning was called "the sweeling," or "swalé-ing."

Marian had linked arms with Ruth, and they all watched the fiery lines and patches—like dropped fragments of the fiery sunset—beginning, creeping, and growing on the remote black moors. This was a time of year joined in Marian's life with the scanty joys that she had known. More than the coming of Christmas—more even than the brass bands playing "Hail, Smiling Morn" very early on New Year's morning—did the coming of sweeling-time always move Marian. And Kirk, too, standing beside her, perceived a murmuring and smiling in the dark land—the hard hand of winter at last removed—the wondrous sound of the earthly blessed resurrection of the flowers.

Marian exclaimed in a low voice, "Fancy! It's the first time he's ever seen the sweeling!"

The warm gentle wind carried from afar the sweet scent of burning ling and heath-plants.

"Can't you smell it?" said Marian, ecstatically. "Oh! . . . isn't it sweet? It's from the moors right beyond. . . . You'll see it to-morrow, Mr. Clinton, all the valleys and the air'll be blue with it. . . . I do love this . . . you'll see . . . There's lots of flowers here later on, aren't there, Jim? . . . clover-heads and butterflowers in the fields, and foxgloves i' Fallwater Clough, like what you talk of . . . you'll see!"

Kirk and Marian spoke now and then. But in their voices an intense and other meaning than of their words quickened between them. Pure, marvellous, physical vibrations passed between them in secret; but Kirk remained unconscious of

their purport. Glows of vague joy and hope filled him, noble thoughts arose, his protectiveness surrounded Marian and her sisters, and extended far from him even over all the toiling people in the darkening valleys. He felt an aureola of sweetness and kindness around himself and he spread it far out over his fellow human beings. He began speaking in a low voice, passionately,

“Oh, Marian! what romance, what passion, what inarticulate longing-to-be, there is in this strange land of mills and steam and engineering and moors, and long wild weather, and spring again! . . . that is the feeling it gives me, the unsung feeling; the joy and the sorrow of this land where life passes so feverishly and unrested, where such immeasurable cry of work, and toil, and love undying, ascends. But the Mother-earth forgets not her toiling child—and Spring comes, and is clasped passionately by her dark Northern child.”

He stopped speaking and thought on to himself, “What can be this quickening and suffering of so many? It must be, yes, is, for some great end of which we still know nothing. They are all to learn some deep thing that as yet they know but dimly. The Lancashire Edwin Waugh felt it, and expressed it as much as his gift allowed him in those poems, but still, still it remains an inarticulate ‘moorland,’ overcoming me, and all who come to it, with the roar of its toil and machinery—so that they cannot yet speak or think, and all their lives are taken up in doing, and yet they have this”—and he gazed at the fires in the sky and the golden moving lines on the dusky moors.

“This is the magical eternal return of its own life to their own moors—their beloved sweeling time, and I see now that these great wilds, the cloughs, the crowded valleys, all teem with romance, with themes of hidden kindness and beauty; and where have I seen lovers more understood, appreciated, and loved of all? . . . and that’s a beautiful sign, and some day in their midst will grow up some mightier poet, or he may be a musician! yes, a musician! into whom will enter the face

and nature of their moors and their lives—so beautiful beneath the careworn lines that I see, and I so feel—and his music will be like all the feelings of these people, like their suffering, patience, toil, going-on-ness—their life—and their passionate love of homes.” “He will be of their very own, but more spiritual.”

Next day the whole sunny, still atmosphere, was stained and blued with the slow-dispersing smoke from the moors; it sank down into the narrow valleys and slowly filled them; it rose up again to stream away across the high moorlands. Gradually the sweet haze invaded every house.

As he went down to work Kirk saw unwonted movement on the distant isolated little farms, so long beaten by winter storm and snows and rain. The cows had been led forth from their close byres, and Kirk saw them gambol clumsily. The distant crow of cocks came on the spring air. Green buds showed in the stunted hawthorns, and Kirk who shared their joy knew that somewhere in these low still-naked bushes the hedgesparrow hid her bright blue eggs, for the little cock sang upon a thorn-tip, his eyes bright as bright, his voice sweet as sweet.

A fortnight later, the cry of a cuckoo while the bird travelled on northwards from sloping leafless copse to copse reached the ears of Kirk, so unexpected by him, and moved him to his soul.

But the repulsion Kirk felt to his work, to engineering, to these coarse materialistic men who do the heavy physical work of the world, had not decreased, and it became more and more irksome, difficult, miserable, to descend from the heavenly and beautiful that he lived in. Yet daily and hourly was he forced to contract himself down to the crude actualities of concrete and excavations, of disputes for money, of watching over dishonest minds. He had to descend and enter minutely into things which no longer interested him. For

he looked far into distant time, and he saw the triviality of the whole material works of the world; he saw in the remote recesses of time these very works, infinitely long-since finished, used, grown old, abandoned, decayed, disappeared; and a new race of men come, to repeat the monotonous, useless, materialistic earth-life.

Never had the irrepressible obscenities of navvies and public-works' men jarred him as they had done of late. But he forced himself sternly and conscientiously to do his duty; and he found a friend who helped him by example.

Mr. Wilkinson watched the works on behalf of the Water Board. He bore the old English title of "Clerk of the Works." He had quickly noted with surprise that Kirk held strong ideas about honour, truth, and good work. For some months he had watched incredulously, expecting to find some more subtle form of roguery; for Mr. Wilkinson had not previously met a contractor's engineer who pleased him. They all had possessed a too peculiar and perverted honour. They were all wolves and thieves in Mr. Wilkinson's opinion. They all thought it their true enthusiastic duty to their employers to get payment for more than they had done, to use less cement and more inferior cement than was specified. They all tried hard to use qualities of material that only just passed the standard of goodness, to proffer worse materials in the hope of their acceptance, and to cheat in every way possible; especially during any temporary absence of the watchful Clerk of Works. But in the past four or five months of Kirk's supervision none of these too common abuses had arisen on the Bruside works, and Mr. Wilkinson had come to take quite a warm interest in this new kind of young man from the South; and, at cautious length, he desired his friendship. Kirk, upon his part, perceived in this man sterling good qualities. He found him just, honourable, helpful, clever, far-seeing in methods, fair in measurement and allowance, and generous in sound advice gathered from his large experience.

Mr. Wilkinson was self-educated. Once he had been a

woollen weaver; then for some years he was a dyer's labourer; but, being refused a well-deserved promotion, he had fiercely put on his coat and left this work.

After severe vicissitudes in small shop-keeping, he became a builder's clerk, and there he succeeded. He became outside foreman, and did good work in school building. He left this staff and passed from new railway stations and bridges to small waterworks, then to large well-known works, and thus back to Bruside, which lay near his birthplace. A quick and eager learner, a natural seeker after refinement, he had benefited by his contact with eminent architects and engineers, and further, by much reading of good literature. His Northern accent was now but slight and his grammar quite good. Kirk and Mr. Wilkinson at times had their lunch together, and conversed on men and things. Kirk found his colleague knew much of Burns and Walter Scott. Wilkinson one day brought out from a cupboard some of these authors' works and asked Kirk—in that shy way of those who live much internally—

"Do you read much, Mr. Clinton? . . . I think you do. Do you know these? . . . I read a bit in the dinner hour, and a good deal at home . . . it's a pleasant change from the work." He opened the Burns while he spoke, and after a few nervously shy movements, he read impressively a few verses that well pleased him, and Kirk was charmed.

The mind of this man was materialistic yet philosophical. He had a slow but acute insight into character. He perceived Kirk to be an idealist, and would have despised him had Kirk not also given daily evidence of downright sound practicality. Kirk discovered a secret timid idealism in Mr. Wilkinson, and that he had a sure artistic intuition in architecture. Kirk advised him upon literature, and also discoursed learnedly on strains and graphics. Wilkinson discussed design of buildings, methods of doing engineering work, books, and philosophical ideas.

On the Bruside works they settled amicably and justly each

point as it arose. Their policy was that of give and take,—the just compromise. The engineer to the Board thought much of Wilkinson, for he had been with him some years and he knew his qualities. Things went smoothly at Bruside, the work done was good, and there were no disputes.

“Old Wilkinson gives that youngster high praise,” said the engineer to his partner; and without Kirk knowing it he began to earn a reputation in certain northern engineering circles.

The concessions gained now and then by Kirk made up amply for any supposed saving effected by roguery. Mr. Bendigo was reaping a steady profit of twenty-five per cent.; he too was well pleased; and with his employer Kirk’s star was in the ascendant.

Expecting surprise, Kirk one day abruptly broke his own reserve, and remarked at lunch—

“I suppose, Mr. Wilkinson, that you think I like this kind of life?”

“No, Mr. Clinton, I have not thought that for a long time.”—The surprise was Kirk’s.

“But that needn’t trouble you; you are very young, you will get used to things. Most men think they could be happy in some line they have never tried. . . . Now look at Mr. Brough, he seems really born for engineering and business, does he not?”

“Yes, I should say he was one in his right field.”

Wilkinson laughed. “Well! believe me, Mr. Clinton, he told me one day before you came—and he was speaking the truth—that his whole ambition is to become a big farmer, and that he hates his business and our own line in life and he longs only for that; he said he meant to buy a farm outright.”

“I should never have thought it!”

A curious disappointment touched Kirk. He had believed himself the one rare person who lived a strange dual life,

among his fellow men. The new fact seemed to tie him more irretrievably to his profession. If Brough could not overcome his environment and fate—so very strong a man—how could he himself escape?

A second thought arose—How had Wilkinson fathomed him?

“... But do I look then as though I hated money-grubbing? As though I were not an engineer?” He asked it anxiously, but the elder man laughed.

“Nay,” said Wilkinson, eyeing him up and down, and smiling wisely,—“you look an engineer all over, Mr. Clinton—if that pleases you! You are young, and you will find as you go on that very few men want to excel, very few indeed aim at being something *genuine*, as you do. They all look at their work as something that has to be done only in order to get money. They don’t care at all if it is good or bad engineering, or good or bad architecture, or good or bad cloth, so long as it brings in the money, and gives the least trouble. That’s why there’s so much bad architecture put up. . . . But life is nothing but duty, Mr. Clinton. Duty is the only thing that lasts, the only thing that ever gives a man satisfaction!”

But to Kirk that cold duty seemed repellant, unescapable, and possessed of an importance that was too lamentable. Ah, were there not all lovely things beside, and none knew what . . . ?

At this time the presence of Mr. Wilkinson was to Kirk a source of real help and steadiness.

A week later and the snow once more lay in patches on the moors and hills, and in long white lines behind the black walls of those solitary upland farms, whose fields creep up to the verges of the waste moors. The cattle were again in their steamy shippens. It was strange to Kirk that this sudden change had come with a dark depression he felt. Since the evening when he had walked back from Junipen, this overwhelming sadness had come upon him suddenly now and

again. Trying to analyse his own feelings he thought it was the desire not to live the world-life, the aversion from human life as apparently set out for him. Sometimes he had even wished he were religious, for then he felt he would be drawn strongly to monastic life. He had read and spoken of love, but always as of some distant beautiful thing he had once known. He had been thrilled, but never once had he dwelt on the acquiring of a home for himself and another. Never had he consciously imagined himself loving and living with a girl, a wife. . . . He pondered over and turned again in mind to the words of the poet and philosopher. "And I consider love unto things and ghosts to be higher than love unto men."—And, thought Kirk to himself, "It was said for me and my rare species, not for Ted, or Minnitt, or Mr. Lucy, or Brough, or Wilkinson."

As he walked slowly up from the works through the cold penetrating air, he sought to re-enter his departing dreams and thus refresh his passionate love of nature. Undoubtedly he had experienced a strange diminution in his old love. He thought it was caused by this material life he was forced to lead and by his sad acknowledgment of the apparently proved truths of Hegel, Huxley, Darwin, and the rest of them.

The ewes had all lambed in the South, but here—he noticed—though the thrush had sung and the sun shone, yet at midday the pools of the undrained fields in the deep foggy valley remained icebound, and the day was now closing in cold, ruddy and frosty, just as in winter depths.

In the South there would be no snow, and the tender green things would all be pushing up through the kindly dead leaves; a rustling would already go on all night in those warm Southern woods, and the sleek shrew-mice would squeak, sing, and glide furtively, and at this mid-day were running in the hedgerow bottoms, or stopping, in the real sunshine, to nibble the first delicate green of the wild geranium— But here . . . life was surely all hard and cold. . . .

He sat silently at the evening meal, and looked once at Marian, as, perhaps, Hamlet once looked at Ophelia. Between himself and woman, there seemed a great gulf fixed. A vague unaccountable but irresistible grief and feeling of unrest drove him to go forth; he rose from his place and with scarcely a word left the house.

When he had gone away so oddly Dinah alone was in good spirits, and scornful with it.

"Ay, Mother!" she exclaimed as they heard the door close—"I think nowt of your fine gentlemen! Give me a chap like Arthur Clegg any day, say I! I never know how to take you. He's like them soft ones ye read of!"

"Tha'd like to have him theeself, wouldn't thee, Dinah?" said mischievous Jim, laughing.

"Not while he's after our Marian!" snapped Dinah, greatly vexed, jealous, and intent to wound. Her dark brunette cheeks flushed up. She interrupted Ruth and Mrs. Gisburn, to mimick cleverly Kirk's voice—" 'Marian, Marian, I feel this land is so romantic' "—"Did ye hear th' soft thing on th' flagstone, sweelin' night?"—" 'Marian, Ho! Marian!' "—and she mimicked Kirk again, very amusingly and maliciously. Jim was laughing so much that the tea in his poised cup spilled on the cloth.

"Dash you! if you say another word I'll throw this at you!" said Marian, picking up a knife—she had gone very pale.

"I tell you I hate him, and I hate all of you," said she.

She pushed back her chair and went quickly and heavily up to her bedroom. She left Mrs. Gisburn angrily speaking.

"What are ye saying? Y're all mad! I never heard the like! He'd not stay here a day if he knew! I'm ashamed of ye, . . . if ye were my own daughters, but ye've no pride in ye! and what are ye? Naught but mill-girls! How dare ye carry on like that, ye huzzy Dinah. . . ." She paused

for breath, and Ruth—most unusually moved—broke in quietly—

“I shall not live with you, Dinah, if you behave like this again. Mr. Clinton is a gentleman, and will never look at any of you, nor, I am sure, has ever looked at any of you, from that point of view. And you must tell him to seek some other house, mother.—As for you, Dinah, you have shown a vulgar and ridiculous jealousy; and Marian has shown her usual manners—and, of course, has left me her washing-up and shelves to do, although it is her turn, as I have no doubt she well knows. I shall consider if it is not my duty to repeat to Mr. Clinton every word that has just been spoken.”

Ruth waited calmly until the outcry against her ceased, and then continued her remarks—“Nor are we mill-girls, mother. You too have insulted me. We were not born to that, you know that we are different; you have never worked in a mill yourself, Mother, you do not know what it is like, and please never again throw that in our faces.”

This allusion of her stepmother's deeply vexed Ruth's pride, for she and her sisters for years now had sustained themselves more than they knew and self-succoured their own weary hearts with the mutual feeling that they were not of the mill-life. They had a hope and belief of better things and better fortunes, and they all secretly looked forward to relief from the forced association with the crowd of ordinary mill-folk—with whom they refused to be too familiar—and who treated them accordingly. The companionship of Kirk unconsciously and immensely had revived them, but in the younger sisters the association had awakened subtly a painful and active discontent with their lot. For months Marian had been living in a secret dream of extraordinary hope and happiness. When Kirk showed her some little unthought preference she was filled with joy. But even to her secret self she had not put questions, for she dared not; and when she had found herself thinking, “Oh, I always knew he would come!” she quickly stifled it with a fear almost superstitious.

She was being carried in rose-light, to a culmination. But is it possible for a young woman to have strong feelings towards a man, without rousing in him at least some kind of answering throb? If he is young, such is certain in the end.

The character of Marian was impulsive, emotional, instinctive, and non-mental. Ruth was refined, sexless, unselfish, and intellectual without the scope. Dinah was strongly built, she was a materialist, of the quickness of a spider, and she never dreamt. Jim was a true philosopher, light-hearted, light of conscience, lightly tied to everything, moderately unselfish, and his clever mind and sense of humour carried him easily through any trouble. He was seldom serious, and those who were unknowingly tempted him to tease or quiz them. Also, he had a wiry, healthy body. He had always been the happiest member of the family.

He showed the same sexlessness as Ruth. He had never been in love. Life with his sisters and his stepmother, during the past fifteen years, had gone to strengthen his somewhat womanish cast of mind. This evening having largely created for mere fun the storm between his sisters, the wise Jim it was who saw most clearly a personal and general loss in the removal of Kirk; and later on, his silver tongue soon argued so plausibly with Ruth quite another course of duty, that she waited, indecisive for days, and meanwhile her pride returned to equilibrium, and her intention waned. In the end Kirk was told nothing, but thought of the more.

CHAPTER XXXI

JIMMIE was sincere and kind, and capable of real feeling when serious. But habitually he was carelessly light-hearted, dual and mercurial, and somewhat insensitive to others' feelings. He was but slightly sexed, and he seldom felt a deep emotion. He had always been a teaser and a chaffer of girls; for he regarded them almost solely from a mental standpoint. Many a girl of the district had dismissed him from discussion with words such as—"Eh! yon Jimmie's nowt but a tease!" or "Jimmie Butterworth's nobbut one o' them lively wordy 'uns!"—"Arve no time t'werst on yon sooart!"—or, "Jim? Ay! Oo's too fly and leet ever to get wed! Tha' shud never think o' him, my lass—yon chap's a bachelor-born!"

Kirk still was undecided whether to spend Easter at Brumside, or go fishing to his Merionethshire haunts. His works were to be closed down for nearly a week. The mills, too, would be silent a little while; they would remain shut on Thursday afternoon, Good Friday, Saturday, and Easter Sunday, making altogether for the girls a holiday of three and a half days—much looked forward to. It was now Wednesday. Some young male friend of the Gisburns was to arrive in the evening, and they spoke of him to Kirk. He felt a novel and disagreeable sensation as he listened:—

"... Ay! he's such a nice young man!" said Jimmie, his bright hazel eyes mischievously sparkling, "and he can play and sing like ten shepsters * on a soonny tree!—you will en-

* Shepsters = starlings.

joy it, Mr. Clinton! Dinah and I say he likes our Marian."

"I'm sure he does," said Dinah, acidly . . . "ay they do look soft when they're together! but you won't be here, Mr. Clinton."

"For shame! how can you talk so? Hold thee clacking tongue, lad!" broke in Mrs. Gisburn. "Dinah! stop laffing this minute!"

But Kirk himself was laughing—to help cover Marian's confusion. She had gone crimson, and glanced angrily at her tormentors. That was just what Dinah had wished to effect. She looked back mockingly at Marian—saying in a loud whisper to Jim—"Just look how red she's gone! I knew it was true!"

Marian replied hoarsely and fiercely—"You'd like to get him yourself! And you can have him if you want him for aught I care; but he'd not look at you."

"Fie! Marian! Ay, how rude she is!" laughed Dinah. Marian's hasty words painfully jarred Kirk, and the girl had seen this. She could have cried with vexation.

Jim, rather sorry, turned his fun on Dinah. "Told me his arm fair ached wi' Dinah clinging to it all th'afternoon like ony little bat! eh, Dinah? Ay! tha't a sticker! Tha't none loose him, would thee, Dinah? Poor lad looked fair worn, Mr. Clinton! so a' sed, 'Dinah, lass, thee'll weare out sleeve o' his new coat!' Arthur looked some relieved, I tell thee, Mr. Clinton, when she loosed him! He wur that frightened ov her!"

"Ay, Mr. Clinton," said Mrs. Gisburn, despairingly. "Ye don't know our girls, they take no notice of me now."

Ruth, sitting beside Kirk, looked deprecatingly at Jim and Dinah and said to Kirk—while the others continued talking—

"You must not mind, please, what they say; they don't really mean all they say, it's not true, especially all that Jim says, but they are so excited about Easter, and the 'walking,'

and mother says we may all go to Pendle Hill, and we should be so proud if you would come with us, if you would care to? that is, if you stay for Easter; it is so fresh there, and the trees and woods are quite like those you tell us of, I am sure, but not so grand, of course. Could you not stay one day with us? and then go away?" pleaded she, ingenuously.

Kirk thought a moment.

"Thank you, Ruth, I will stay Easter with you."

"Mother! Mother! he is coming with us to Pendle!" exclaimed Ruth, very much pleased, but Mrs. Gisburn had qualms.

"Ruth, you'd no right to persuade Mr. Clinton. His own folk and his sister will be wanting him for sure?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Gisburn, I shall enjoy it very much; besides, I thought of going fishing to Wales, this Easter."

"Ay," said Mrs. Gisburn reprovingly, "young men do waste their money! I thought you'd have stayed here or else gone straight to your home—Eee! the like of it, gurls! To thrape all yon hundred of miles and back for a morsel o' fish not weighing but a few pounds!"

"Things pass into their opposites by accumulations of indefinable quantities," said Landor.

Kirk's reserve and separateness of mind had frequently repelled and hurt the sisters during the first few months of his stay with them; but now he had come of liking to call them by their Christian names, but still Mrs. Gisburn and the girls never dreamt of addressing him by other than his surname. Quite frequently upon the dark winter evenings he had taken them walks along the great upper valley road—two, and sometimes all three sisters together. To obtain those walks he had crossed swords with Mrs. Gisburn. He had made these girls—young women—take his friendly arms when nights were frosty and roads extremely slippery. On the first occasion Ruth was on his left and Marian linked upon his right. This had given him happiness—a brotherly

feeling in the dependence on himself of Ruth—a novel pleasure in feeling the warm soft arm of Marian held firmly in his own.

On that first winter night-walk Marian had been silent a little time, and then, physical nearness bringing mental intimacy, she told him they had thought him at first the proudest, most standoffish young man they had ever met. At this he was astounded; he thought himself socialistic, and was profoundly unconscious of his own aristocratic glance and bearing.

Marian then had said gratefully in her best manner, intuitively speaking like Ruth,

“But now we know you better, we think you . . . we think you . . . are the nicest young man we ever met! even Dinah says so.”

It was so easy and self-pleasing to be a perfect god of intellect, learning, and grace, among those girls simple of even moderately fashionable life and learning, girls who had never seen London, never been to a ball, or even to some small great person’s “At Home.” But Kirk was unconscious of his position and his state of mind. He was flattered, pleased, and the affectionate and generous nature of his youth had quite obscured his first clear criticism. A powerful protective feeling for these girls grew in him, and he meditated further combat with their step-mother. He had re-read Robert Blatchford’s “Merry England,” and now he perceived very clearly, as he thought, the waste of energy caused by polished furniture, mouldings which required dusting every day, bright metal surfaces, fire irons, and all household things that demanded the labour of tired girls—to keep them in that foolish state of perfection that Bruside society and Mrs. Gisburn so rigidly enforced. To Kirk, these things now appeared as cruel idols, and Mrs. Gisburn and all old women as their obsessed priests. In his warm, indignant, youthful heart, he felt increasing pity for these girls. He now read frequently to them, especially when he saw they were physi-

cally dead beat. He had quickly and with internal fun discovered the heel of Achilles in Mrs. Gisburn—he saw the male human being was her fetish, and that she bowed to it—to himself;—and his bright eyes had twinkled at Marian when he first discovered this. Mrs. Gisburn tolerated these forced interruptions of the household sacrifices, because Kirk was a man of that age of sons, when they exert their greatest influence with mothers; and then, too, he was a kind of male she could not entirely understand, and his superior breeding told with her very much. Kirk was often quite aware that she had gone on herself rubbing and dusting ostentatiously—waxing a little noisy—just to shame her daughters into helping her; and the young man, from the corner of his eye, intercepted her furtive and indignant glances at Marian, Ruth or Dinah. But he read on sublimely, putting all his voice and passion into these recitations. All three girls eagerly and gratefully took this new, romantic, and adroitly procured rest; but Ruth's pleasure often was but partial, between fear of her mother and a stern internal and distorted sense of duty; on the other side, her thirst was keen to hear Kirk read beautifully in those classics that he and she alone in that family really appreciated. When he had finished, the others would say they had liked that line, that sad bit, or they cared for this verse, but what Ruth said was worth hearing, and she discussed with Kirk as with an equal—to his secret surprise, for he thought persistently that Marian alone could enter most into those delights . . . but then she was always the most physically tired out, decided he.

On Good Friday afternoon Arthur Clegg arrived from Bradford. He had cycled over, and the brown canvas case which filled the space between the cycle-framing contained his entire kit for Easter. He turned it out gleefully on the front parlour table. Kirk saw with astonishment a dozen scores of Gilbert and Sullivan. When he saw the music he had a feeling which, months later, he knew was jealousy. Little else seemed to have been brought by Arthur, and Kirk

felt a strange evil pleasure in the absence of toothbrush, collars, handkerchiefs and night apparel. Quickly the piano was opened by Marian, and Arthur at once sat down before the pages of the "Mikado."

Some twenty minutes later Mrs. Gisburn entered the room, her face a little red, her thin lips compressed.

"I'm right glad to see ye, Arthur, but it's Good Friday, and I can't let ye play them light things . . . whatever would folk say? I could hear it in the road. Ye can play them to your heart's pleasure to-morrow, and there's no one likes a bit of music better than me and the girls; so ye'll excuse us to-day." All this was said very firmly.

"Oh, it's all right, Mrs. Gisburn, I'll play something sacred, if I can find it."

While their stepmother's back was turned he made a grimace at the two girls. Kirk himself was vexed at the interruption, for Arthur played and sang tunefully and with vigour, and Kirk had forgotten his first impressions—for the music was so refreshing and delightful.

"All religions are idiotic," thought he. "It is exactly like my own kill-joy father." Ruth alone timidly agreed with her stepmother, but said nothing. Kirk himself now went out for a short walk.

Soon after Mrs. Gisburn had left the room—taking with her Ruth to aid in the preparation of tea—she again heard the piano going briskly, and listened—just in time to hear a seven-fold fortissimo "Amen." She stood again, for she thought she heard giggling—but she believed herself mistaken. Arthur, persuaded by Jim and Dinah, continued to play opera, and each page or so was ended most cleverly by a loud "Amen," or with the final verse of some well-known hymn. Dinah each time smartly opened the parlour door to let out the "Amens," and promptly closed it to confine the echoes of the "Gondoliers."

Kirk took his brief walk and returned. He changed his things, and then went to join the others. Pausing outside

the door he heard loud laughter. He turned the door handle, and as he entered he saw Arthur throw a cushion at Marian who lay back on the sofa, laughing a trifle thickly. Kirk saw her flushed and laughing face, beneath her arm raised in defence.

He had received a shock. His face betrayed a change of feeling, Marian's face also changed as she saw him. Arthur glanced sharply from Marian to Kirk, and his expression hardened. He muttered to himself angrily, "Oh my! Oh! *we are important!* can't she do what the hell she likes?"

Arthur Clegg did not possess sufficient means to marry. The obstacle he chafed against was the avarice of his parents; and then, indeed, to curb his desires further was his own strong love of money. Both his parents he knew with certainty would resent most seriously his marriage to a girl who had "no brass." He told his mother he was going to Scarborough to join a male friend, and he said no word of the Gisburns. He would, he knew positively, be turned out of house and home if he made such a marriage against his father's wish. Yet for three years he had sought with pleasure the hearth of the Gisburns, and there he had made mild love to Marian. He grew more and more uncomfortable between love of money, love of liberty and desire of Marian. For many years now he had worked long hours with his father, who was a yarn merchant in a rather small but persevering way. If Arthur left his father, and took similar work, his salary would be insufficient for marriage and thorough enjoyment of himself; and, very much more serious, he might lose his father's fortune. Arthur therefore awaited with a calculating impatience the failure of his father's precarious health and his consequent retirement. The son would then carry on the business, and money would be more plentiful. He had a fair opinion of his father's acumen in business, and for his mother he felt an ordinary young man's affection, plus some fear of her tenacious will and future interference.

Mrs. Gisburn had long looked on young Clegg with great favour. In years past, she had visited his parents, for they were old friends of her husband, but of late years Arthur alone had maintained the connection between the families, but it was now six months or more since he had seen the Gisburns.

His weakening attraction revived when he received Ruth's note of invitation, for she had mentioned Kirk; indeed, she had written nearly a page about "Mr. Clinton." So Arthur instead of going to Scarborough accepted the Gisburns' invitation; and made no mention at home of his changed destination.

On Monday morning before the Gisburns' house stood a wagonette harnessed to a pair of good horses. Kirk of his own intention took a seat beside Marian. On her left sat Arthur Clegg. Kirk felt no uncomfortable social incongruity, for he was the only member of his caste in the district, except the parsons and the doctors. He was in Rome and found the pleasure of youth in doing as the Romans. It was all very amusing, very novel. His sense of mirth and humour were constantly tickled by the driver's free conversation with Mrs. Gisburn, by the fact of himself bowling along à la char-a-banc in the middle of a kind of Bank Holiday turmoil. The crowds of uncouth people in the streets though all dressed in black were full of gaiety, and shouted many a warm and pithy greeting to the merry-making family. And then, too, Kirk felt a desire to win the affection of these people with whom he lived, to be really one of them when with them. He had not analysed these feelings. His warm enthusiastic heart, curiously inexperienced, and so unconscious in matters of the heart, was now expanding and preparing to add to the worship of flowers and nature the adorable form and soul of woman; of which he knew nothing. Never had he kissed any girl but his sister. He had never understood or questioned the meaning of his boyish attraction

for Maud Nugent—he had never romped with young girls. He was now far removed from that southern beauty and entrancement of downs and fields and skies and flowers; and his immense stored-up human affections began to put forth arms to enclose what lay around and to hand.

He was very happy in this wagonette, he was in the highest of spirits, frequently laughing and making funny remarks and he felt, in his neat puttees and his excellent tweeds,—yes, and especially intellectually,—he felt a supreme superiority over all Arthur Cleggs, and he knew by sure instinct that Marian thought the same. A magnetism passed through Kirk when he took his seat so closely touching her. This morning she looked rosy and radiant, in some new way she was transfigured. Her blue eyes were full of thought, and though she smiled and laughed, yet she was serious, for between herself and Kirk she was aware all the time of a tense emotional union. In this mood she especially attracted Kirk, and as he felt the occasional slight pressure and warmth of her limbs against his own, a pure and strange pleasure filled him. To him the contact was as though he were privileged to hold her hand. But while he sat there, amid the jollity, he suddenly imagined he took her face in both his hands, looked affectionately into the blue eyes, and kissed her on the brow. He abandoned himself to these overpowering fancies. Women, it was revealed to him at this moment, were the utter miracle of beauty and mysteriousness; he could not understand what it was that attracted him so deeply, nor what caused that high reverence that filled him when he was very near to them and that now aroused a confusion of beautiful, chivalrous, poetic and fervent feelings. His generosity, his tolerance for all kinds of people, his intellect, the realness to him of spirituality, he now saw had all been growing wonderfully augmented, because at last—thought he—“I understand women.” He became unconscious for a moment of where he was. Life was immense and glorious; he perceived the whole earth, its

seas, its climates, the mountains and plains, the high passes, the wild hut in the deepest tropical forest. He perceived the whole human race toiling, forbearing, suffering, loving, hoping, doing things splendid, dying in hope, living again, better, finer, finer still—and he too was one of them! his very own self!

“I, likewise, verily am one of you.” He was thinking this fervently when his soul as it were arrived back in his body. He secretly sent out his thoughts to those among whom he sat, and he felt greatly this intimate consciousness towards Ruth and Marian. He desired to see these two dearly love each other in the future. A gladness and a great change filled him.

In the past months he had too clearly realised that the sweet flowers bloomed only for themselves; the love-filled lark sang only for himself, and for his little hen sitting upon her eggs amid the clover! but not for him, Kirk. No. And since then he had felt at times like a miserably excluded lover, shut out absolutely from the one he so loved—from exquisite Nature, and her pure allurements which had drawn him into those shining bodiless dreams, in the woods and fields, and among the wild flowers and sweet places.

But now he saw suddenly all this divine sweetness linked indissolubly to man, *through woman*.

Men it was, and not women, who had made the desolation and the hideousness through which they drove. But how touching, how womanlike, were the little signs of Spring that revealed themselves bravely, with faith and hope, among the begrimed stones and traffic, even in this bitter climate.

For—while a stone was picked from the hoof of the leader—Kirk, Marian, and Jimmie descended for a minute. Kirk went back a few yards with Marian and they looked down together, through dirty iron railings, into a pure white crocus which had risen up and opened itself in a black patch of cold and dusty garden. Secretly Kirk thought how like were

the fates of these two, the girl and the flower. His heart yearned over each. "Thank God," passionately thought he, "Bruside is far sweeter and fresher than these abominable large towns, these densely packed and befouled valley-bottoms."

They crossed the Yorkshire border, descended for two miles, then turned southwards and soon entered a bleak flat northern countryside, at first almost treeless. They were in Lancashire. Far ahead in the blue and brown plain they discovered Clitheroe, rising up like a distant castle.

"Fancy! Marian!" began Kirk, intimately, looking forward at Clitheroe, while Ruth also leaned to hear him—"I used to sit in Church at my home, at Severnly, when I was a little boy, and read the word Clitheroe over and over again. It was cut on a tablet in the wall. Above was the coat of arms, coloured and gilded, and below you read the Latin words—'Cogito ergo sum'—'I think, therefore I exist'; then under that, 'To the memory of Ernestine, the beloved daughter of Stuart and Jeannie Falconer, who died in her twenty-first year, at Clitheroe.' . . . I wonder who she was. . . . So she is somewhere near here, and her tablet is away down at my home. . . . I wonder if she knows we are thinking of her? . . . I never thought I should one day be actually going to Clitheroe. Suppose some one had said to me then, —'In thirteen years time from to-day you will be driving to Clitheroe . . . with some one beside you.' "

"What strange thoughts you have, Mr. Clinton"—said Ruth—"I never knew any one who was like you."

After Clitheroe, they entered the one-time demesne of an abbey. Fine trees closed in the outlook. The sound of wild pigeons in a deep larch covert filled Kirk with glamour.

"I once wrote a little poem about that dear wood-sound," murmured he to Marian.

"What! did you? well! there!—I thought you were like that!" said Marian.

To her this seemed exceedingly romantic—actually to write poetry!

"I have it with me, Marian, in that big box; I'll give it to you, if you like?"

"Oh, I should like it, awfully, to see what you've written, I'll bet it's nice!"

Kirk laughed merrily, well pleased and flattered.

They arrived at a grey stone farmhouse. The inmates were old friends of Mrs. Gisburn. Kirk spent some time with a child who made wonderfully faithful heads of pigs and cows and sheep and horses, all from a lump of soft and very dirty dough; and he greatly interested the mother when he asked her how long the boy had done these things, and told her seriously that the child had good talent and should be watched carefully; and Kirk related to his listener how Goya had begun by drawing cows and horses on the barn doors of a Spanish farm.

Arthur, Kirk, Jimmie and the sisters, after they had lunched, followed a brook up through the sunny April fields, towards a high knoll.

How celestially shone the bright new open celandines to the eyes of Kirk! He threw a spell over the girl who walked beside him and drew her within his own enchantment. He told her rapturously of places that he loved. Never before had such dreams and feelings filled Marian.

"The celandine is nearly the first wild flower that opens, it's a flower of the sun—and it means . . . What do you think it means, Marian?"—He looked into her eyes—"It means . . . 'Joys to come!'"

Arthur and Dinah, following close behind, now caught up with these two.

"Come along, Marian! let's get up top first!" cried Arthur. He caught one of her hands and pulled her along, then Jimmie took her other hand.

"All right, Arthur!" exclaimed Dinah. "I shan't forgive you leaving me . . . Mr. Clinton, do give me a hand up,

there's a dear, you look kind enough. Oh, I am so tired!"

Kirk laughed at her familiarity and took the proffered hand. They followed the others at a more leisurely pace, and after going only a few yards Dinah withdrew her hand to adjust her hat. What she had just said to Arthur was quite true, for she loved him a little in secret—but would have preferred Kirk.

When near the summit of the hill Dinah left Kirk and hastened upwards. He stood still, turned round and looked dreamily out over the wide view. A few minutes later Dinah and Marian were rushing down the steep slope. Arthur galloped between and pulled them on with a strong grip. He and Dinah laughed breathlessly as they flew down, but Kirk saw Marian was pale, her mouth slightly open, and that she nearly fell at each leap. Instantly he rushed after them—caught them up—and seized her as he ran—she freed her hand from Arthur's as she panted "Don't! Don't!"—and Kirk swung her gradually round to a standstill. She sank down fainting. Kirk knelt by her and deftly unbuckled her belt.

As she recovered, Arthur and Dinah came panting back up the slope and stood beside her. Kirk spoke hotly to Arthur.

"You should not have done that. You must know she's not fit to run like that."

"Pooh! Mr. Clinton," calmly said Arthur—between his own pantings—"Marian's only out o' breath. We've run together, down this broo, long before ever you came near!"

A sense of invincible strength and rivalry filled Kirk. He said almost rudely, addressing Arthur as though he were speaking to a little boy—"Then you should understand her better than you do."

"I'm all right again, now," said Marian, faintly.

She took a hand of each young man, and was helped slowly to her feet.

"I must have got, I think, a weak heart," murmured Marian.

"You! you big strong thing!" contemptuously cried Dinah—"Ay! she's always pretending she's something the matter! She's lazy, that's what it is." And Dinah laughed unkindly.

This displeased both young men.

"Walk back with me, Marian," gently said Arthur, linking her arm in his. He had much more aplomb with girls than had Kirk.

But Kirk was not disturbed or jealous, he knew intuitively that he was far more powerful than Arthur, in affecting this girl, if he wished so to do, though as yet he had not put such desires into definite thought. But this feeling of power gave him great unconscious pleasure. Then, too, there was something astir in him that was infinitely sweeter than that feeling.

"Besides," thought he to himself—silently addressing Arthur—"she is much nearer to my kind of spirit than she will ever be to yours."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE spring and autumn were always short and fleeting times at Bruside.

The summer of three months, very warm though often cloudy, had for some weeks swept a hot wind across the moors. To Kirk, now reading Turgenev, the rapid change from cool weather seemed like the sudden summer heat of Russia. Shawls had been discarded, windows were daily set wide open, and the hawkers brought strawberries, and shouted through the open doorways of the houses. Marian's face at first had glowed with colour, and her white blouse showed the smooth neck curving to the rather broad shoulders, those deceptive shoulders that so often in women bespeak the apparent strong, but constitutionally weak. Marian could lift with her strong round limbs a heavier weight than could her sisters, and when a child she often had defended small friends with her fists; yet now she constantly and suddenly found herself ailing. A few years before Kirk came to Bruside she had suffered a number of faintings, and the old doctor had been called in reluctantly by Mrs. Gisburn. He had noted the patient gravely, as one likely to die of the inherited family weakness, that he saw recurred. He had then told Mrs. Gisburn, and noted further that she disbelieved him, and that he had offended her.

"What! our Marian? Ay, Doctor," smiled Mrs. Gisburn incredulously—"ye don't know them as I do," and she had smiled again with a hard face, and—as she thought—with a superior knowledge.

"It's but a girl's ailment! I mun treat all alike; if I coddled yon I ha' to coddle th'lot, and they'd sit round or lig-a-bed and laff, and where'd wark get to, doctor? Ay,

there's none much amiss with th'lass! It's all naught but women's troubles!"

Seeing the expression in Dr. Rennie's face, she had added, "Tho' ye mean well, doctor, I know, but our Marian's t'same as mony lasses, at her time."

Long soured by over contact with loneliness, grown somewhat indifferent by what appeared clearly to him as the endless futility of human life, Dr. Rennie relinquished his secretly generous motive towards the girl.

"She'll be weel out of it before the others," thought he, grimly, and said good morning smilingly, and added humorously, "I think ye feel ye really didn'a want me, Mrs. Gisburn?"

"Nay, doctor, I just wanted to hear what ye thought, the girl was queer-like, and Ruth said ye ought to see t'lass, an' fowks might gibble-gabble if I didn't call ye in, and I let her persuade me t'send for ye."

"Well; I will say gude morning, Mrs. Gisburn."

Mrs. Gisburn kept to herself all the doctor had said.

The heat in weaving sheds—those immense one-storied slate and glass-roofed places—was now intense. The girls, released from one to two o'clock, hastened home over the heated stone paving, along the hot street, between the heat-reflecting stone walls. They came in sweat-bedewed, dusty, and sat down often too exhausted to enjoy the hasty meal. By a most unfortunate habit of our land, this noontide meal is made the most substantial of the day. A light mid-day lunch, and dinner eaten leisurely after work is finished, would be the good thing. The mid-day meal ended, the girls had to rise at once, put on their hats, and hasten back to labour in the deafening uproar and the heated, steamy, greasy, and vitiated air.

Marian said nothing about it, she endured in silence, but Jim and Dinah at the week-end told Kirk graphically what they had all gone through that week.

"You and mother have no idea what it's like, Mr. Clin-

ton!" said Dinah, with a certain amount of unconcealed contempt.

"When our breakfast time comes, we have to eat it sitting on straps between th' looms, and there's no blinds or nothing to keep the sun out, and underside of slates as hot as hot. The butter's all oil o' th' bread, and cold bacon's half melted. Ackroyds had to stop yesterday afternoon, they're regular mill-girls down there, and they struck wark, they say th' overlooker swore he'd sack every one of them as soon as he could get fresh hands—if it took him a six months; but yon rough wenches cared nowt, and off they all went, 'whum.'* Ay, and it does weave bad this hot weather! Our Marian had her looms stopped every minute the other afternoon, hadn't you, Marian?"

"I wish you'd not talk about it," said Marian, painfully and wearily; "let's forget it while we're away; let's enjoy the week-end, it'll be gone quick enough."

It jarred Marian to hear her humble means of livelihood too freely spoken of before Kirk.

These hardships aroused in Kirk first a scorn, contempt, and resentment against the God of his fathers, and with that, a resentment against the rich. Feelings of intense sympathy, grief, and longing to help all these girls upon whom heavy burdens were laden, increased strongly in him, and he sought especially how he might help and make happier Marian and her sisters. How miserably impotent he was. Oh, if he had only possessed money! He would have taken them all far away to some of those lovely places he knew, and there established them comfortably, to live and enjoy themselves. But now they were visibly being made old. They were visibly and cruelly being worn out before his very eyes.

How exceedingly blessed to these girls were the precious summer Sundays, especially to Marian, who, while she suffered physically, suffered yet more emotionally.

* home.

One of these Sundays was a day of fresh breeze, occasional warm shower, and hot sunburst, a day of purple speeding shadows climbing the steep flowering fields of dark northern grass—moistened to-day by the warm delicious showers. Marian, temporarily revived, brought into the house in her arms a neighbour's child, a small baby-girl, bright-haired and very attractive. Standing up in the living room she leaned back on a table and pressed her cheek against the child's velvety skin. She put her fingers in the baby's curly hair—

“Love me, Jeannie! love me, dear, love me!” said she, and the child threw her arms round Marian's neck and put up a rosy face which the girl covered with kisses.

This was all seen by Kirk. He thought it most beautiful, and, as he went up shortly after, through the fields rising above Bruside—past the little mountain ashes now in scented flower—walking by himself in a dream, he murmured to himself—“Whoever loves her must love her for ever.”

The sweet rain fallen in the grass absorbed its scents and rose again, filling the air with a faint moving vapour, laden with honeyed aroma of the red clover, and a fragrance from the fast-growing grass. Kirk drank in the exquisite exhalation and as he climbed over the dry stone wall and entered at the foot of the highest and steepest field—one that ascended steeply and joined the wild moor—he looked up and saw the light pouring down the hillside, pouring through the crimson petals of the sorrel, and unconsciously he marvelled at this, for all the undulations of the slope were marked in luminous carmine: he raised his strong eyes until he looked at the sun, and at this moment a vivid light suddenly filled his soul. He turned half round with a hand at his heart, immensely surprised, deeply enraptured.

“Why! I love her! *I love her!* Why! I am *in love!* I love you, dear! I shall love *you*, dearest, for ever; and you do not know!”

CHAPTER XXXIII

A ONE-STORIED house of double-boarding had been built on the water-works. The foreman, George stallabrass, now found this house very hot and he mentioned it in his solemn manner to Kirk. "Them slates get that powerful 'ot, Sir, seems ac-too-ally 'otter 'ere, Sir, in this 'ere valley-bottom than dahn in Kent! Missis can't keep a bit o' meat, or a drop of milk but it turns, and them bedrooms ain't fit for Christians."

The place had been roofed with slates brought from one of those pulled-down cottages. Kirk stood a moment, then be-thought him of a remedy,—

"Stallabrass! Why not whitewash the roof? I believe it will make a great difference. It must, now I think of it. Whitewash the roof at once. Get whatever you need."

That same evening this was done, and a few days later Kirk asked Stallabrass—

"Well, another hot day, and how is the house?"

"Oh! *com*-pletely improved, Sir! It's most a-*pre*-she-ably cooler, you'd be sur-prised, Sir, it's a right good tip that," said he, and went on to speak of other matters. But Kirk was not listening, for he saw a vision of Marian's weaving shed, and he had made the roof dazzling white, and the interior cool, and his youthful heart glowed . . . but how to accomplish it in actuality?

At lunch he sought Mr. Wilkinson with questions— Yes, Mr. Wilkinson said he could even find some figures, he thought, about cost of whitewashing; he had once done a big engine-shed at Leeds; he calculated it made ten to fifteen degrees of difference on a hot day.

"Really! Did it really?" Yes, he would look up his notebooks that night and let Kirk know to-morrow . . . And he asked Kirk—"The firm have some such job on then? urgent?"

"No . . . I was only wondering why no one had thought of whitewashing the roofs of mills and weaving sheds . . . I notice all the girls and women seem to be suffering so severely, cruelly, from this heat. It even melts the butter on their breakfast bread. It's hard enough at any time in those horrible places"—Kirk had become rather warm and earnest—"but they must feel absolutely sick and stifled on a day like this,—in fact I know they do—and it so affects their health and looks . . . besides, it would pay the owners to whitewash, because they'd get more work done. I think of suggesting it to several owners I know."

Wilkinson was smiling in a dry way and looking very keenly at Kirk. He had heard rumours.

"What! you're a bit of a philanthropist, Mr. Clinton?"

"No. Not at all," said Kirk, coolly, keeping his countenance.

"I'm afraid you'll get no manufacturers to see it from your point of view; they'll not part with their money for whitewashing."

"But you admit, on our estimate, that it will cost well under a farthing a square yard?"

"I daresay, Mr. Clinton, I daresay, and it may cost even less, but that isn't how money's made; most mill-owners spend only what they are absolutely compelled to spend."

Mr. Wilkinson smiled at Kirk in a fatherly way, for to him such an idea seemed extraordinary and chimerical.

"It would need an Act of Parliament, Mr. Clinton. That is the only way!" said he, genially and finally.

"But," replied Kirk eagerly, "if the people only *knew* the small cost—a penny a head—if they *knew* the great benefit? Would they not then do it themselves? Surely if it were

forcibly put to them they would act? Surely, the owners would let them do it themselves?"

"They might . . . perhaps; but such things are full of difficulty—there are hundreds of such things that might be put right, but why aren't they?"

Kirk was silent, and Mr. Wilkinson's eyes twinkled.

"I think you are one of those young men who imagine they are going to set the whole world right. Many men have felt like that when they were your age, Mr. Clinton."

Kirk smiled resolutely. A lion-like look came in his grey eyes.

"Well, you'll bring those figures to-morrow?"

"Oh yes, I'll bring you the figures!" laughed Wilkinson.

The two men ruminated. Mr. Wilkinson smiled to himself, for he culled an amusing idea—young Mr. Clinton was just like his old dog had been, when it was young, when it used to run five times as far as was necessary, and spent amazing energy on straws and sparrows, but now the old fellow went steadily, like his master, going strictly from the obtainable to the obtainable—but young things were very cheering and good to watch, and he smiled secretly at Kirk, and felt warmly towards him.

Kirk's heart was alight with determination. He would see what *he* could do, and do quickly. He jumped up and went out. That afternoon he would go far up to a niche in the hills—that were sombre even to-day although so sun-bathed. Kirk wished to see a farmer about opening a stone quarry on the edge of his moorland to supply the works. Aikrigg could not supply sufficient rubble. He now decided that on the way back he would speak to that small mill-owner who had woven the big covers for the engines.

He seemed rather a decent fellow, better than most, and quite intelligent. "The great thing is to get *some one* to do it, the others will follow,"—thought Kirk to himself.

High upon the edge of the moor, Kirk three hours later

was returning; he carried his jacket across his shoulder, for the day was so hot. The day was indeed superb. Kirk walked far above all that welter of minute human life—down there in the valley—and, through the faint haze and blueness, he watched the mighty wheeled rays of the sun march onward, over the far spread land and hills and vales and moors. His heart was disturbed by this very splendour of the sun, that was so in contrast with the sorrowfulness and dark mystery of the toiling human life. For Kirk was overcharged by the increasing tender love and pity he bore towards Marian.

As he walked, the sense of her pure being seemed ever-present with him. Ah! how beauteous and splendid was the sun! But how cruel! Yes! the sun was indeed the symbol-physical of God—the loving joyous sun, colouring all the flowers of the earth. And Kirk, gazing out, saw in strong imagination the early morning, the sparkling dew drying from the mowing grass, the gloss upon the starling's speckled back wet from the brook; he saw the light glowing in the golden buttercups, the eager winds drawn of the sun through countless trees; the sunlight spread God-like upon a thousand million harvest fields—tilled by man. He saw the vast light of the sun falling for ever on the rolling earth; he remembered the vapour that ever rose invisible from the round immensities of oceans, to become these endless clouds and rains and dews.

But Marian! that dear pure one, his dear love, was down there, suffering, and what could he do? He *must* protect her. But misery!—for how could he marry one so infinitely purer? And he loved her, loved her, and would love her for ever!—*somehow*, by *some* means he must and would be her saviour; but yet he was not pure enough, unselfish enough, to offer himself to join life with her. Some one of truer and more capable mind, a man richer, of greater stature, surpassingly nobler than himself, should marry with her. . . . But if he never came? . . . how sordid were nearly

all the men he had ever met, oh! and himself, compared with women, with his beloved mother and that pure one that he now loved in secret.

Painful thoughts, intense feelings of great pity, of his spiritual inferiority and impotence, overwhelmed him as he gazed. How weak he was! he could not even help one girl. Now was clearly revealed to him the terrible difference, between the sorrowful wretched squalor of man's life—and the ordered splendour of nature. There, before him, in all its ugliness, dirtiness, disorganisation, hopeless imprisonment, crawled on the human life—beneath this superb rushing wind—beneath the lark, singing this minute with vivid joy and sweetness far above him, while the mighty wheeled rays of the sun marched over the far spread land and hills and moors—and oh so beautifully, but unheeding, over the horrible mills!

He threw himself down on the rough grass of the moors, his head upon his tightly folded arms, his eyes shut, his brows strongly contracted.

How could there be a God? How could there? How *could* there be a loving Father, with power to heal all suffering? with power to remove those we loved from that hard, cruel, defiling, destroying, daily life? How *could* he permit those pure ones to be offended by devilish obscenities, to be beaten down into silence, into that muteness of old prisoners, long imprisoned, and looking down fixedly and hopelessly. Already he had seen that look come in Marian's eyes. He started up into a sitting position, his soul filled with a dark resentment, and a fiery resolution.

"Then I will myself rescue her. Curse all those horrible social laws! man only can help man! Oh! God and Sun, I perceive what thou art!" exclaimed he.

"At last!" thought he, hurrying downwards. "I do realise that mankind, alone, can help mankind."

On the next day he obtained the information he had

sought from Wilkinson, and having arrived home very early he shut himself up in his room, and there wrote the draft of a perfervid and vigorous letter, headed—"BENEFITS OF WHITEWASHING WEAVING-SHEDS IN HOT WEATHER." He wrote out a number of copies, and selected a *nom-de-guerre*. He then added a short forceful covering note, to be sent to the editors of the twelve greatest papers of the wool and cotton towns; and very late on the same evening he went out and posted these writings. The weather grew even hotter than before, but during these next few days Kirk was delighted to find every one of his letters published, and, what seemed incredible, his letter was dealt with very favourably in no less than five short leaders, and further, in a complete column of the "Textile World"—perhaps the chief technical paper of the Riding.

The Butterworth girls kept the secret of authorship, for in his letter Kirk wrote pointedly of the duties of husband and sweetheart, towards accomplishing the reform he sought, and the girls feared innuendo, or even injury of their position at the mill, where the letter and leaders had at once caused very considerable discussion.

A few days later, Mr. Wilkinson, with his dry kindly smile, met Kirk. To-day, the smile spread all over his face—

"So you've rushed into print, Mr. Clinton?" said he, quizzically. Kirk not answering at once, he quoted from his favourite author:—

"‘A chiel’s amang ye takin’ notes,
An’ faith he’ll prent it!’"

"There is a good old rule, Mr. Clinton, that I think you have not heard of?"

"What might that be?" asked Kirk, smiling, but painfully self-conscious.

"Never write to the papers."

"Well!" exclaimed Kirk, hot and scornful—"Thank God I never heard of it! and if I get but one single shed white-washed, I shall be immensely pleased! Remember Emerson—'Nothing great or good was ever done without enthusiasm!'"

"Oh; so you are doing something great and good?"

Kirk blushed slightly.

Mr. Wilkinson felt stir his paternal interest in this strangely boyish young man from the South. He had desired for several weeks to say something to Kirk, to give him a warning, to show him to himself, and now certain words in that letter arose in his mind; he hesitated, and then steadily looking Kirk in the eyes, said with some feeling,

"Mr. Clinton, you must be careful of our Northern lasses . . . they are so very sharp. You must mind they do not entangle you."

Kirk felt a deep uncontrollable blush rush up until his ears tingled. He could think of not a word to say.

"You must take no offence, I mean none. But I think you'll be very attractive indeed, to our young women, Mr. Clinton."

Glancing again at Kirk, he then spoke in a very matter-of-fact voice—

"The big well's ready bottomed up, and Stallabrass wants to concrete it at once, while the pumps are all right. We better go and look at it." So they began to walk towards the well.

In the mind of Mr. Wilkinson came a decision that he would discourse unpleasantly to Kirk of love and marriage when the opportunity arose at one of those midday pauses in the work. His own marriage had been unhappy. His wife had not risen with himself, she had hampered him, and still hampered him. He held very pronounced views on both early and unsuitable marriage. It was the only bitter subject on which he brooded. His life was mostly in his work and his books, but he had also a keen interest in local politics

and elections; in fact he had written a pamphlet or two, and very clever and satirical they were. At this moment he said to himself, "Damn the women! the young chap ought not to be living with those wenches."—"I'm glad I spoke to him . . . if he can only be turned in time—after what I've heard, and by his blush it looks true."

CHAPTER XXXIV

KIRK was in that high revelry of the soul and body; first love. His poetic and artistic perceptions were opening fully, his physical joy of the earth and human-life was vivid. Never before, thought he, had he been so conscious. Secretly, with increasing fervour, he loved Marian. She was become ever-present in his thought.

Late one night about this period, he was walking through sultry air towards a railway terminus. The gloomy badly-lit streets of this great city were not, thought he, like those of London at this hour, for these already quickly grew deserted.

Indirectly through Brough, Kirk had been asked to join the geologists' association of this city, but being now a Fellow of the Geological Institute, he had courteously declined this lesser honour. But this evening he had been to a meeting of this local association and, at their request, had given a short lecture on the Cirenhampton problems. The audience knew that he was completing a lengthy thesis on the subject.

His lecture had been well received by a company of men all very much older than himself. He was happy; he had been appreciated, but this pleasure was only the quiet accompaniment to the joy that sang in his heart, to that loveliness which had been born in him so suddenly, on that glorious morning only a month since! He thought of his own rapture, and he stood still a moment to recall it more vividly—and he smiled tenderly, in the dark street, as it came upon him again, that he, of all men, was actually in love!

Since then he had written the first verses he had tried his hand on since he was a boy, and he cherished the words in

his heart. How dearly astonished would she be when he read them to her, some day . . . for he felt quite sure, now, indeed he knew, that Marian loved him in return.

Lightly-built but sinewy, he walked with ease of movement, shoulders back, feeling the play of healthy muscle in his limbs. Life was God-like. He felt a noble insight uplift him. This then was that wonderful love! Marian, it was she—beloved pure one—whose influence had made even the people in the street become dear to him. At Cirenhampton he had one day unawares become conscious of the sorrow, the wornness, the apathy and grief, in the many faces passing him; and not long ago he had passed through that dark hour on the sunlit moor—but now, in all human faces he perceived goodness.

During this past month he had received many a friendly glance from passing men, from men he had never before seen; and from women he had taken many a pure and kind unwonted glance, and he had with emotion returned them all. The old world was good.

"Dear human beings!" cried he to himself, putting out as it were wide spiritual arms around them; and a rich world-brotherhood filled him as he strode easily along, between the dark and tall buildings.

She it was who made him feel so heavenly, pure, and gentle, and so filled with aspiration. How pure she was!

A faint sub-conscious cloud, or warning, had come at times. It gave him that feeling he had experienced when he heard the laughter of girls carried up to him at Junipen . . . But he had blown such feelings away! To-night he was deeply happy in his marvellous secret.

As he approached a high corner of buildings he suddenly stopped. He listened. He fancied he had heard a shriek . . . then again but distinct he heard "Oh!"—screamed by a girl—then "Help! Help!"

He hurriedly turned the corner, looked, drew his breath in and sprang forward, for he saw dimly ahead beneath a lamp a group struggling—perhaps two hundred yards from him. He raced forward, his grip tightening on his ash stick. He noted two young men stepping impotently round, one looking to and fro uncertainly for help; then he saw that a third man held a girl by her bodice and shook her violently. As Kirk rushed up he saw her clothes were ripped from neck to waist, that she drooped speechless, that a second girl screamed and wrung her hands. Dropping bag and stick he shouted as he covered the last twenty yards—"What is it, you fools!" He saw cruel knuckles pressed into the girl's naked bosom—and he jumped on his man with a savage cry of "Loose her, you swine!" He locked his left arm round the man's neck and struck with his right. The man loosed the girl and instantly gripped with Kirk.

Kirk had seized the wrist of the defiling hand; it was coarse, hairy, and so big that his long fingers could not meet round it.

Thoughts went past like rifle bullets. "One punch from this brute and I'm done!" "Wrestle him!" "Spread your legs!"

Then, "The curb! the curb!" shouted his brain with a fierce joy as they rotated panting.

Kirk made two lightning shifts of grip—lower—lower—fingers rasped across his coat: something tore—another sudden shift and his shoulder was below—in the fellow's stomach, both arms round the heavy loins—he heard sledge-hammer blows on his own ribs—but he thrust furiously from his thighs—his opponent gave backwards, faster—faster—Kirk shot a leg forward and his man fell hard and cruel on the stone.

Up again still clutching: tightly straining: turning: the man striking at a disadvantage: Kirk's shoulder low, lower! legs well spread! wits flashing! and the power in him of great wrath. Round and round they went into the road-centre—

the stooping man jabbing savagely with a short bent arm—a heavy blow struck down Kirk's ear, it almost tore it, and instantly a fury of ferocity seized him, he went berserk! he desired to kill! he imprecated the man in fierce gasps, as they struggled, then he rushed him backwards and hooked a leg before the man's heel struck the curb. Kirk leaped with his falling man. His weight on one knee drove down on his opponent's chest: it forced the breath out. Kirk was gasping, "Can't loose! the brute's! hands off!" His clothes and flesh were tearing, he went mad, twice drove his other knee down, wrenched and rewrenched his hands free a second, seized the head by a coarse ear, by its hair, and dashed it on the stone with oaths, once! twice! "*blast you!*" thrice!

The hands stopped pulling at his throat, he and what he would kill were among the feet of a dense mass of people. They were shouting, treading on them, but Kirk clutched his still-resistant prey, feeling for his neck, intent to kill. A dozen hands were pulling him, and a fierce voice beat on his ear-drum—"Let him get up! Let him get up, you coward!"—Other voices altercated excitedly over them, men pulled and shoved violently—"I tell you he was knocking her about!" "Nay!! Nay!! tha fooils! get t'yoong chap oop!" "He got him off her, I tell you!" "He is in the right, I tell you, damn you!" "The leet weight!" "*Ee's ith reet!*" "*Coom ert, Sathdern!*" "*Oop with thee, lad!*" Kirk was dragged to his feet, he saw the devilish dazed face of his antagonist reeling backwards surrounded by arms and gripping hands, and himself was struggling frightfully to reach that face, but the crowd were between them in a moment. Two big men had Kirk by the arms, and were hauling him off urgently though he resisted furiously. As they ran him along they were laughing and exclaiming—

"Tha yoong bloody deevil tha! Coom on! th' pleece are nigh on us!" "Wer'd ye live?" The educated voice was also at his ear. "Come on, my dear fellow! get away this

very instant! you don't want to figure in this affair, you've *quite* settled your man!"

"Eleven—ten—Bruside," panted Kirk.

The pace was quickened—"T' stertion! Coom on!! Bruside noomber six, tha knows! quick, lads!" they were still laughing as they ran,—"*ee's a reet un! E's a fair reet lad!!*"

"Thuther's gotten a sore yed! Haw! Haw!"

The guard was holding his light up to the engine driver as Kirk hilariously was thrust into the last carriage. His kindly backers somehow had secured his bag and stick, his trampled straw hat, and a portion of his tie.

They threw them in pell mell. Kirk came to himself, leaned hastily out of the window, saw he was leaving twenty grinning faces behind, and found breath to say "Good night! you fellows!" They laughed—and so did Kirk—as he distinguished among other shouts, given in the rapid dialect—"Yi! tha's a reet lad! but wadd'll-thee-mooother-ser-wen-thee-gets-wumm?"

"Tha's bin feightin! yoong felly." Kirk drew his head in and looked at the speaker—a man in clogs.

"I have," said Kirk, panting hard, and he dropped on to the carriage seat.

He felt a glorious savage exultation for the first few minutes: but there was soon a fly in the ointment. His thoughts were running on—"But the swine *deserved* killing." "You should have done it without language." "You *bestly* animal!" "Well, I couldn't help it" (indignantly to himself) "and I beat him." "That fellow thought you were right, and he was a gentleman." But a vision of the girl's breast and the horrible knuckles in it instantly absolved him and he apostrophised himself, "Oh, dry up, you old woman!" "I wish I'd damaged him more!" "I wish I'd smashed his damned skull!"

He felt very done up now. The reaction was great. He

still panted, and momentarily brushed the hair from his wet forehead.

"What's yon i' thee 'ond?" asked the man in clogs.

Kirk looked down, he found he was holding tightly the wristband of a shirt, it was strong "union" and quite clean. He put it quietly out of the carriage window—"What an affair, tearing each other's clothes," thought he with renewed disgust.

Two of his nails were broken and bled: all the skin had gone from his right hand knuckles, where they had struck the flags. He sat forward swiftly from the cushions and stealthily felt round to a place on his ribs, it felt wet and too tender to touch again. He put his hand over his knee, for he perceived the cloth was torn, but he lifted his hand again because the knee was so painfully abraded. He smiled grimly to himself, "Well! the devil gave *me* something, too!"

The man in clogs,—having thoroughly eyed Kirk during these mental and physical manœuvres—now settled himself comfortably back for sleep, and Kirk heard him murmur once or twice, with a gentle reminiscent enthusiasm, "Ay! Ay! feightin! Nay, there's nowt like it, lad, . . . for foon, nowt like it, for foon! . . ." and the train gradually jogged him into slumber.

Meanwhile, Kirk's hands had begun to stop trembling. He was quite used to that, for at school when he did so much boxing, he had found as did all others that one could not write for half an hour or so after the daily bout. But he did now dislike to feel his knees shaking like the ague; and, to tell the truth, he also felt he must look a bit pale; and suppose Marian or Mrs. Gisburn were sitting up when he got back?

This reminded him of the presents he had brought for the sisters.

He hastily opened the bag. Yes! how lucky! they were

all right, three thin gold bangles. He wished to give Marian a present, and yet conceal the fact from others. So he bought three bangles. But in the shop he had been unable to resist selecting one just a little, a very little finer, for Marian. "To give her a hint that I differentiate her"—thought he, sparkling to himself; for he was as certain as he lived that Marian loved him; and she would interpret the difference. The other bangles were a pair.

He had told the girls he would bring them something, and Mrs. Gisburn had protested.

But Jimmie had laughingly supported him:—"Leave him alone, mother!" said he. "They don't grow young men like Mr. Clinton i' these parts, thee let gurls and him alone, mother!"—and Kirk had dashed off for the train without hearing more.

He thought they might be waiting up as it was Saturday; and as he approached the door he rubbed his cheeks with his sound hand, to take any pallor from them. But the tired-out girls and Jim were all in bed.

Mrs. Gisburn instantly noted the disorder of his clothes. She insisted on examination, chiding him and telling him he was lucky not to have been kicked and badly hurt. "I' these parts, i' Yarksheer, they feights wi' their clogs, not wi' honds. Three or four chaps knocks a mon down, and then they all poonces him with their clogs!"

She soaked his shirt off his back where it stuck, for the buckle of his braces had been knocked into the flesh and had cut him deeply. With toil-hardened hands, she rubbed liniment over his bruised and swollen back.

"She succoured and brought up Marian," realised Kirk, and impulsively and foolishly he kissed her on her forehead as he said good night.

"Ay now, I do feel as if ye wur me own son, Mr. Clinton, look you," said Mrs. Gisburn, slowly: delighted, and for once feeling a little sentimental.

CHAPTER XXXV

KIRK had come to be very well known in the neighbourhood of Bruside, and, overtaking one day the owner of the mill in which Marian worked, the strong and illiterate Yorkshireman spoke to him in the friendly and familiar north-country manner. They walked on together down the big graded road, descending the hillside. Sutcliffe looked down into the valley where away below could be seen the seeming confusion of the new waterworks. His eye rested on innumerable white dots that he knew were navvies in their clean Monday shirts—but of the future work he could make out no idea as yet, from the confusion of deep excavations, lines of brickwork, temporary light railways, the curious overhead cableway, the green squares of new concrete, and the massed materials that were spread out there under the August sun.

“Tha’t makkin’ a rum commotion down yon! Mesther Clenton!” “But ar’ hear tell thee knows what thee’t oop to! better than mony an owd head? Ah?”

Kirk laughed. “Oh I think we are doing all right, thank you, yes, we’re pushing on fast while the good weather lasts.”

“That’s reet enow—there’s a main of brackley weather i’ Bruside parts. . . . Yon cable’s a rumfettled thing! Ar couldn’t think for life ov me whatever tha’d got on! when tha began putting it up. But *thee* wark’s not like mine! Weather’s naught to us mill owners.”

“Hast ever been in a mill, Mesther Clenton?”

“I’ve been into Omerod’s and several other woolen mills, and into the old Bruside spinning mill, and a few others.”

“Then thee’s seen nowt! Yon two’s nowt! Why! thee must

come and see *my* wark; ay we've summat to show if tha't fond o' machinery! Tha mun see my mills and t'wavin sheds, we're all oop-t'-derte! Ay! Ar could put three o' they little mills i'side mine! Aexcept i' Lonkisher tha'll see nowt lake it! Woollens is nowt!" He stopped to get Kirk's reply—because for some occult reason Kirk attracted north-country men, and they desired his good will, and, again, George Sutcliffe's whole heart was in his mills.

"Wilt coom to-morrer?"

"Well, let me think," . . . the only thought that filled Kirk raised a vision of Marian, would she like him to go and see her?

"Very well, what time shall I come? Ten o'clock would suit me best. I always go down to the works before breakfast."

"Ay, I know that! young felly," and Sutcliffe laughed strongly, and continued—

"Till *thee* come, we'd allays heard Sathdowns was lig-a-beds, but a *por-et* said, 'one hafe th' world knaws naught o' tuther hafe!' I'll be yon, ten o'clock. O'v geeten two o' newest rovvin frames fra' Lonkisher, just set oop, th' new ring-spinnin'. O'r daur say ye've heard tell ov?"

Next day Mr. Sutcliffe showed Kirk the whole process of converting raw cotton into finely woven cloth; but Kirk did not take in much, for immediately he entered the mill he was again shocked; first by the heat and foulness of the air in the roving rooms, and next by the sight of the little girls and boys—the "half-timers"—clothed in dirty and grease-bespattered clothing—urgently carrying baskets of "cops" on their bent shoulders. Some of the children looked sturdy, coarsely hardened, but many were attenuated, pale and old-faced. The roar of the machinery deafened Kirk. The hot air was full of fine fluff. Narrow alleys, but two or three feet wide, separated the immense rows of frames, flying wheels, belts, and spindles; the low, naked wooden ceilings

were a very network of driving shafts and belts, and even the woodwork was saturated with warm oil and grease. Grown-up girls in little more than skirt and bodice tended and bent over the mass of complex steel-in-motion that crowded the floors. These, Sutcliffe told Kirk, were the lowest-paid women in the place.

Kirk, serious-minded, shouted loudly back in his ear:—"The hardest work always seems the lowest paid,"—and Sutcliffe laughed tremendously, he took it for a great joke—Kirk's secret thoughts would have astonished, even angered him.

The exceeding marvellousness of the machinery, elaborated by clever brains for over a hundred years—pressed itself on Kirk—but oh! these girls and children! They made him feel ashamed to be clean, to stand there before them in unsoiled well-cut clothes; they made him feel shame to have ease of bearing, easy hours of labour in the fresh air, and good holidays. These women did not look at him, they had no time to, and he felt he brought painfully before them—in himself, his rosy cheeks and fine clothes—the bitterness and gross injustice of their life. It was like running and racing exuberantly before a cripple. He imagined himself the cause of regrets and of futile longings for a happier life. He felt out of place, uncomfortable, sad, impotent. He pretended a cold-blooded interest in the wonderful machinery the while he avoided the pale eyes of these driven-ones, so closely attentive in the presence of the master. "These are th' roughest wenches we've got i' my mill," shouted Sutcliffe, apologetically it seemed.

"Ar reckon to keep wavin shed select. Joost stay here a minute. Ar see John wants me, thee kon look agen at this sune-and-planet-motion."

In a few minutes, Sutcliffe returned.

The weaving shed was a room vast and square, roofed with twenty long ridges, each of upright glass and a slate slope. Countless iron pillars supported the roofing. Inside the

place, the lines of looms were packed so closely that, as he walked, Kirk instinctively kept his elbows very close to his sides. The noise was quite incredible. He could hear nothing that was said, except when very loudly shouted right in his ear. The air was much purer, but seemed intensely hot. The August sun poured through the blindless glass. But here everything was cleaner and brighter, and he perceived the girls were of a class superior to those he had just left. He wanted these girls and women to realise he set himself no higher, as a human being—that he was one of them, the sole difference was that he had been more lucky. As he went along very slowly, careful of the rapid machinery, he was smiling, and shouted remarks to those he passed; for he knew they understood what he said by watching his lips. His words were very every-day, but brotherly and kind in their expression.—“Good morning! I have come to see *your* kind of work”—“I have never seen weaving before, what very clever work you all do here!”—“I hope it’s weaving well?” This expression was, he knew, quite idiomatic.

He saw nearly every eye was upon him, and all the weavers were smiling, and he could see they were all talking across from one to another, with their lips.

Then Kirk sighted Marian in one of those narrow passages that cut the massed machinery. She had looked at him from the centre of the great room when he first entered, and her deep emotion caused her to stoop over her work, and affect indifference. Down went her head, and then in a second glance she caught the lip words of another girl—“Heigh! Marian! here’s thi young feller come in wi’ George Sutcliffe!” Her ears tingled in her pale bright hair. She feared to look up and read the laughing innuendoes of the other girls. Kirk came towards her, followed by Sutcliffe who was looking round and grinning behind him; and he addressed his weavers silently:—“Ay! you wenches! Ha daur ye say all them things! ye’re makkin’ Marian and Dinah fair twinge, ye young huzzies. T’ yoong chap’s gotten more sense i’ his

yed than dandle it wi' ony one of ye!" Then he stopped and spoke crossly—"There ye go! there ye go! two looms stopped! Ar never pass thee but tha's gotten a loom doin nought!"

The somewhat haggard girl he addressed hastily attended to her work, while Sutcliffe stood by her.

As Kirk approached, Marian went quite pale. She wore a white apron from neck to feet, and the scissors of a weaver hung at her waist. To Kirk, how sweet, proud, and dearly humble she looked! and so pale. "God bless you, dear," said he to her with his eyes and his heart, and to himself "I'll take you out of all this, please God or not." Now he was talking to her of purpose. The whole great room was looking, laughing, talking, envying, scandalising, as Marian well knew.—Ah! but they did not know him as she knew him, and she raised her head and looked round almost defiantly. Whether he married her or not, she would always love him!

To Marian, all flushed again, and herself smiling at herself, this was a moment never to be forgotten.

"Art bothered with inspectors i' *thi* wark?" asked Sutcliffe when they had gone outside—and the silence seeming extraordinary.

"Speak louder! I can hear nothing! my ears are full of noise!"

Sutcliffe laughed, and shouted the question.

"Not very much, the inspector of explosives troubles us sometimes about our magazines, you know."

"Factry inspectors does nobbut interfering, getting up Accts and what-not. Ar shall have to shuut oop mill one o' these fane ders," said Sutcliffe, very bitterly, and continued, "Doost read pappers? Yi?"

"Then hast seed all this tarrel-darrel about wate-weshin' sheds?"

"Yes, I have seen that, to me it seems a sensible thing, both for you and the workpeople."

"Sensible!" cried Sutcliffe. "Chaps as says *yon* sooart of thing i' pappers knows nowt about wark-people! Tha't herd o' Acet for carbonic? Nay? Sproong on us laast year—ith winter-time—Ventilertion Acet! Mester Clenton, Ar coot doozens ov holes in rooves, and put up all yon oogly things!"—He pointed scornfully to a number of large ventilator-cowls on the roofs.

"Owd Robert Halliwell coom to me, end o' first day we'd geeten yon things to wark—he says:—

"'George!' he says to me, 'I ha warken an' waven for thee an thi feyther twenty-five years, han't I? and doost want me to stop? Doost want to put me i' th' grieve?—If doossent stop yon ventilertor ovver mi yed, I konno wark for thee another hour!—Om fair starved oll-ovver! arv nigh ketched me death o' cowl this der, ar dowbt.'

"'Robert,' says I, 'tha con stoof every sod o' they oop to-morrer, but what'rl inspector ser?'

"'Us wavers 'ul terk blerme arselves, George,' says owd Rob,—an Ar tell thee, Mesther Clenton, th' wavers stopped en all oop, thersens—an' I went straight an' shoood it inspector when a' coom—an' he laffed an' said—'All right, Mesther Sutcliffe, tha's complied with th' Acet, tha' counno do no more.'

"Cost me eighty-two pun three, and all good's doon is t'owd zinc-worker as done job! And na it's wate-weshin! An' two windy-bag MP's askin' questions 'ith-House yesterday. An th' Acet being prepared!"

As he spoke they entered the mill offices and a moment later both heard a woman's voice call loudly—

"Jarge! Jarge!"

Sutcliffe smiled, and remarking "Yon's th'owd rib!" he returned into the room he had just left, and Kirk heard the following—

"Eh! Jarge! I wants thee shirt! A'rm weshin."

"Ast brout annuther?"

"Nay, tha's onny two oothers and they're ith-toob, tha's mun do wi'out shirt till thee dinner." "Nay," grumbled George—"but tha' should ha brout me a clean 'un."

"Coom on, lad!" said Mrs. Sutcliffe with asperity. "Mak haste! it's warm enoo! an tha't werstin my time!"

After a short silence, and the shutting and opening of doors, George returned to Kirk in a buttoned up state, and, with much goodwill, saw his guest off the premises.

On the way down to his work Kirk became filled with resolutions. He must earn more money; that was the only solution. He must put away all these foolish dreams about Nature, and about writing beyond Richard Jefferies; he must cease bothering about geology, he must set to work and pass certain examinations—the passing of examinations was coming into more prominence than had previously been known in the history of civil engineering. This fact weighed upon Kirk. He resolved he must at once begin to work hard in the evenings. A feverishness of mind and a perception of urgent responsibilities greatly disturbed him. He felt a renewal of enmity against his father, for refusing him the new engineering training that had so replaced the old pupilship. "Had mother lived, I should now have been a Student of the Institute, and have done the exams before I had to earn my living."

But never mind, he would do it himself—though heavens knew he worked hard enough already,—especially this getting up so early, it made one sleepy in the evenings. But forthwith he would make out an evening time-table and stick fast to it.

On arrival at the works the writing of business letters, the well-ordered labour around him, and a conversation with Wilkinson, calmed young Clinton. Later on he watched the men leave work, he stood by the time-keepers while they "subbed" some of the newly joined navvies, and then he left

for home. As he went through the two peaceful and flowery little fields at the hillfoot—he looked up and saw the whole early evening sky covered far overhead with an exquisite dappling of small clouds. This bright pageant moved on slowly like a silvery fleet, each cloudlet keeping distance from its fellow voyagers in the pale blue sea of ether. The immense calmness and loveliness of this sky shed an uplifting of hope into the entranced eyes of Kirk—he felt he was to be empowered to help and love Marian. Strong faith in himself, and in the eternity of his love, filled him.

“Who loves her, must for ever love her, and it is I who love her.”

He sought gently in the short dark northern mowing grass, and made a very small beautifully arranged bouquet of wild flowers, using just a sufficiency of fragile grasses to give them an ethereal lightness.

When he entered the house he found the sisters were at tea.

Marian looked at his flowers and said in a low voice, “How prettily you’ve done them up.”

“Do you like them? Will you have them, Marian?”

He took a little vase, filled it with water, put in the flowers, touched them once or twice and placed them by Marian, smiling in her eyes as he did so.

The girl’s tired face lit up and love marvellously altered her appearance, as her moistened eyes looked down into the sweet little wild flowers.

“You girls!” exclaimed Kirk enthusiastically, “and, Marian, especially you,—if only I could take you South and show you places I know—where you can smell wild white violets in the lanes—where the banks are pale with primroses, and the air like breathing honey!—and the wild roses, so delicate and sweet . . . like very, very young girls, I always think them.” He stopped a moment and then spoke on in a calmer voice, and the girls listened, and intently watched

him, for his face, his voice, his shining eyes that were seeing things they had never seen—held them like a spell.

“. . . For the secret about wild flowers is, they appeal to our emotions far more than do cultured blooms. Lilies and petunias please us in a way more intellectual, but the wild flowers are of Proserpine, of the young Earth in love; for they have less of thought and so much more of joy! they are not languorous and still, but are full of joy and vitality; they wave all day in the wind and hot sunshine, and at night they know no shelter; for they sleep under the stars, and the moths come to them, and the creaking rail-bird slides past them in the short delicious night; the pure dew refreshes them, and when the morn comes the clinging gems clothe them in rainbows.”

After this day Kirk brought home each evening a few wild flowers. He arranged these as an Italian would have done, using but one or two kinds of flowers at one time. To-day he would bring white stitchwort and blue Veronica; to-morrow, a choice spire of crimson sorrel, one buttercup and one bit of wild parsley, all partly hidden in a cloud of trembling grasses.

Marian loved these little acts and thought of them in day-dreams, when she could. She listened carefully to Kirk's curious instruction for placing flowers in a vase, she comprehended dimly and learnt by heart his little formulæ for harmonies of colour and arrangement. It was destined this should be all she would ever learn from Kirk, of her own free will and wish. Her surprising aptitude with flowers thrilled and delighted Kirk. “I knew her real nature from the first!” thought he with rapture.

CHAPTER XXXVI

KIRK said nothing to Marian of what was in his heart; and during the next three months he redoubled his energies. He was on the works every morning by six o'clock, and thus gained more time for private study later in the day; and he increased his evening work, frequently sitting upstairs over his books till long after all the household, saving Mrs. Gisburn, had gone to bed. She insisted on waiting up for him, and saw that he ate a piece of her plain but delicious cake, and drank a glass of beer before he went to bed. A slow tacit friendship and understanding grew between them, but far stronger upon her side than on his. Repeatedly she told him not to overwork, not to strain his eyes, and her solicitude was grateful to him, but his grave argument was always the same—

“You see, I am now a full-grown man, Mrs. Gisburn, and I am extremely anxious about the future. I must obtain these diplomas and leave no stone unturned to earn more money.”

She told him he was very young, there was plenty of time, that he would make himself old before he was young, and she told him of her own husband, who had brought on nervous disease by similar feverish, unceasing activity.

“And we’d no thought of what he was doing, he’d never give in until he was over-wearied, and he looked a stronger one than you, and he’d such a terrible temper, though th’ doctor said it was but his illness coming made him so neshed. Ay, you’re doin’ too much”—She felt his arm with her powerful hands, “ye’ve gone quite pinched these months, y’r sister ’ll blame me when ’oo comes.”

In these moods he would ask her impartially about the

history and childhood of the Butterworths, his desire being to hear about Marian, and be strengthened in his feelings. She would reply with an equal impartiality, for she had become fond of him, and read his thoughts through and through. Gradually she had come to set her heart on possessing him as a member of her family; a marriage for Marian was to her but the means to the end. Already she loved Marian far less than Kirk, so it would have seemed to the outsider.

The familiarity of his presence, month by month, had worn away those first conscientious scruples, when the incongruity of such a marriage clearly had appeared to her. She had lived all her life among a people who possessed few social barriers. Of caste she knew nothing, save that of wealth, and, excepting her Bible and her prayer-book, she had read no books. She had learned of the early death of Kirk's mother, and knew also of the severance from his father.

Several old friends had lately hinted to Mrs. Gisburn that they knew the state of things in her household, and recently the vicar had called.

Mr. Vosper saw his parishioners in their homes at but long intervals. Such visits were mostly due to serious illnesses, or to death; and occasionally he pleased deeply by his charming and genial presence at the wedding-breakfasts of the young men or women who belonged to his own Sunday-school class. Undeniably he had favourites among the village girls. In the Bruside valleys the Church of England, even to-day, has very well attended Sunday Schools; and Kirk had been surprised to find that men of sixty and even seventy years were still regular "scholars" of a church Sunday School. This old and reverend south-countryman, Mr. Vosper, was truly respected and beloved in Bruside. By means of a large heart he understood the people among whom he lived. He was not inquisitive; he was well-bred; he had never quarrelled with his bell-ringers; his choir respected him; he was no teetotaller: and no one in the district could make a wittier, livelier, more kindly-shrewd or affectionate

speech than he. He had, himself, christened Marian, and she had been a member of his congregation from her childhood. She was one of his favourites. He thought Marian a girl exceptionally devout. Since her father's death over twenty years ago, he had taken a particular interest in her, and at an age unusually early he placed her in charge of a junior class. The experiment had, however, not been quite so absolutely successful as he had expected.

Mr. Vosper had been much pleased to observe Kirk's regular church attendance, and meeting him one day in the open air he introduced himself, and they conversed a few minutes, Kirk impressed favourably by the refined nature of the rubicund old gentleman. When they shook hands before parting the vicar remarked,

"'The Sabbath well spent brings the week of content.' I am an old man, Mr. Clinton, and times are much changed, but, believe me, that law still holds good."

Kirk, susceptible to the strong and kindly feeling the old man shed over him, forebore to say that in much of the Church's doctrines he was at heart an unbeliever or doubter. His conscience slightly pricked him at this deception, for he well knew it was the influence of Ruth and Marian that caused him to attend these services.

The unpreventible gossip of the vicar's old housekeeper was at first put quietly aside by him, but a rumour that Kirk was about to leave Bruside and go to some other works—and some further pertinent remarks by the same old lady—gave him disquietude. After considerable hesitation, he determined to call on Mrs. Gisburn. Not to do so, thought he, was neglect of a plain duty. He found her in the kitchen, but they were both at ease with each other and she was proud to receive his rare visit.

He talked to her of local things, seeking opportunity to warn her, but at last he spoke directly.

"Young Mr. Clinton is still staying with you, I think, Mrs. Gisburn?"

"Yea, he's still with us."

". . . Does he tell you anything about his family? . . . I think I heard he was not on such very good terms with his father?"

"I know varry little, Mesther Vosper, but if it's true I'm thinking it's none the son's fault."

"Ah; but that is very regrettable; and I hear he has no mother? Good parents, we all know, Mrs. Gisburn, have a great influence on the early career of a young man." He thought a little—"But I am glad to see him at church every Sunday. . . . Is he likely to be here much longer?"

"Well, he thinks he will be here nigh another year, he says there's a main deal o' wark to be done yet."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

Mr. Vosper stood up as though to take leave, and held Mrs. Gisburn's hand in his own; his fatherly fear and love alone moved him, as was shown by his sweet voice—

"My dear Mrs. Gisburn, you and I are old and tried friends. You must be careful with these young engineers, they are good fellows, many of them; but they are here to-day, and gone to-morrow."

"If you mean Mesther Clinton—Mr. Vosper—I'd trust him anywhere, wi' ony o' my girls."

"Forgive me! Forgive me, Mrs. Gisburn!—you know what a respect I have for you and for the girls . . . and Ruth and Marian . . . I have seen them grow up from little ones. . . . We are old people, Mrs. Gisburn, you and I, and we know there is always danger and temptation even to the best of us." Mr. Vosper's face was ruddier than usual.

"Ay, I'd no thought t' speak sharply to ye for the world, Mr. Vosper," said Mrs. Gisburn, apologetically, but she stood there awkwardly with no more words to offer, and the old gentleman bowed himself out, feeling somewhat rebuked, unsatisfied, and still anxious about Marian. "She is impulsive and good-looking, and very attractive to young men, as I

have noticed," he mused, "but she is devout, yes, I think she is a devout girl."

In the evening, when all but Mrs. Gisburn had gone to bed, and when Kirk had come downstairs from his studies, she told him of Mr. Vosper's visit, of what he had said, and what she had replied. She possessed no power of self-analysis, and would have denied that her motive was anxiety, and the desire to bind Kirk. The incident was grateful to the vanity of a young man so self-conscious as Kirk. It roused in him that sense of invincible power over himself, of his unassailable strength and pride of honour. His secret thought was—"They will see! they will see what I am in due course.—Vosper utterly mistakes me!"

To the old lady he spoke with a slightly flushed cheek and with his grey fanatical eyes sparkling,—

"Thank you so much for telling me, Mrs. Gisburn, I'm glad and proud you think that of me, I rather admire the old Pharisee in the Bible who said 'I thank God I am not as other men.'"

"Ay, yr' varry young, and varry larned. . . . Ye must think what's best for yourself, but a man mun be ethher a man or a mouse."

Mrs. Gisburn in future avoided any very definite thoughts about Kirk and Marian, but she had some insight into his character. "What would happen, would like happen," thought she,—and it had entered her mind, that whatever Kirk put his hand to would be accomplished. Her pride had always been ministered to by the district. It was a common saying in Bruside parts—"Ay! she's a proud one, and a hard one, is Mrs. Gisburn." She would have endured any hardship rather than take a gift, "even from the hand that loved her." Had she sunk into poverty, she would have asked nothing, but would have died quietly of starvation. This pride, this austere vanity, aided her in looking forward unconsciously to the culmination she hoped for. She had no power of introspection. She did not realize that half her gratification

would be the association of her family, on equal terms, with one of higher rank; the other half—was her deep desire for a man son. Jimmie's temperament was unsympathetic to her own, but the austerity of Kirk attracted her.

Marian, Jim, and Dinah, were very much franker than Mrs. Gisburn and loved to parade the unconscious Kirk through Bruside and the neighbourhood.

As Kirk's intent developed, a silence had grown between the sisters. Ruth was the only person in the house unaware of the attraction between Kirk and Marian. Ruth lacked small observation, and her sisters in her presence intuitively ceased to speak of Kirk. Dinah, acutely jealous, had so far been restrained from showing it too openly by the good nature and common sense of Jim, who alone could influence her.

These two when alone had repeatedly of late discussed Marian's prospects of engagement and marriage. Jim lazily socialistic, lukewarmly philosophic, and quite careless and ignorant of class and caste, mildly and affectionately desired fulfilment of his sister's love, but said no word of it to her. He curbed Dinah's jealousy by his arguments. They had a long discussion just before Christmas.

"Well! Dinah, lass!" exclaimed Jim, laughing lightly, "he'll never want thee nor Ruth! any child can see that. It's Marian he's takken nortice on, from first. I saw it reet plain when he'd been here nobbut three months; but she's a deep one, is owd Marian, and now—it's Marian this and Marian that, and nowt she does is wrong, and all yoong chaps are like that, so what's good o' trying to spoil th' foon? Besades, he'll mak' money, will yon, and geet on, no-end; ony foo' can see that, and ar'll bet he's geeting fouer pounds a week now, look at all th' expensive clothes a' dons, and going off rod-fishing hundreds o' miles for nobbut a few days, like he used to. And he's generous, is Clinton, and no Bruside lad ever gave thee things like that, afore,"—he touched Dinah's bangle. His sister smiled disdainfully and listened on, sitting on the table, and dangling her short but

well-made legs. "Then thee can't go on at th' mill for ever, Dinah, tha' knows: an' if no one weds thee . . . ; an' a' doubt mysen, Dinah!" laughed Jim, "ar'll get caught mysen a' reet! some der . . . and be wed and bed and hafe-a-dozen childer, there'll be no money left for thee, lass! But if you marries Marian it gives thee a good chance!" Jim began to laugh at his own imagination as he put his hand on Dinah's arm. "Eh! Dinah! folks 'ull say, 'yon's Dinah Butterworth! they're good uns t' Butterworths—her sister Marian wed yon Mesther Clinton who's gettin' his ten pounds a week'—Fancy going and visiting them, too, after they're wed, Dinah. Ay, and it'll be such foon having a wedding from th' house! Mother 'll have to draw some money out and thee and Ruth 'll have new dresses and hats, thee'll be bridesmaid and I'll bet he'll give thee summat good for that!"

"He'll never wed her, do you think?" said Dinah, half convinced, and thinking hard—"He's that queer, such a little thing puts him reet off, it seems to me. Why ever doesn't t' lad ask her?"

"He will! he will! if thee'll stop makkin th' poor lass turn her worst side out i' front o' him. . . ." After a pause, Jim spoke rather gravely, looking at his sister—

". . . Dinah, thee't a little fou devil—thee't wick wi' malice. . . . I can't think how ye can take Communion nigh every Sunday. . . . Have ye thought it would nigh kill her? Have ye forgotten how cruel hurt the gurl was when Jim Thornaber misbehaved to her? And it was thee she told. Ay . . . you have altered yourself. . . ."

Dinah flushed a little, she was sitting quite still now. Her thoughts reverted to Marian.

"Nay! It's the wench herself!"

"Di! Dinah! tha's had a good finger i' upsetting her thee-self o' late and thee knows it!"

Dinah replied sharply.

"So did thee! Thee started it first! Why don't ye think like that when *he's* about? It were thee started me!"

Jim began to speak, but Dinah broke in—

“I can’t abear either of them now: I never met such a stuck-up affected chap in me life, and Marian that slobbering with him, and always pretending they don’t love each other—the great strong thing she is.”

Dinah stood up and from the window looked sadly at the opposite stone houses; she heard the tramping of boys in the street.

“Why, Dinah! they’re all silly when they’re i’ loove, and you know as well as me and mother what th’owd doctor said about Marian.”

An impulse to comfort Dinah and make her laugh moved Jim. There was a real friendship between these two, though so unlike.

“Why, he’s the nicest young felly I’ve ever strock or thout on!” and Jim began to laugh.—“If a’ wur a gurl I’d marry him to-day! and dang th’ courting, if I’d chance!—Fancy leaning on his arm on th’ prom at Douglas!”

Jim began to give an amusing imitation, he seized Dinah’s arm, leaned over her, looked languishingly into her face, and made her walk across the room—

“Kirk, dear, shall we go for a drave?” “Yes, dorling, let’s. Oh, how sweet you’ve done your hayair!”

But Dinah experienced a fierce return of jealousy and disappointment. She stood still, shook off her brother, and spoke bitterly.

“I’m sick to God o’ the mill.”

“Ay, cheer up, lass, th’at young still and better looking nor Marian, and I’ll swear Dick Ollerenshaw’s after ye, if ye’ll only treat the lad reetly, and Arthur Clegg never knew which to choose o’ ye and Marian; and when she’s out o’ the way?” . . .

“Come on”—said he—“and have your tea, and think over what I’ve said.”

Dinah obeyed, and endeavoured to set her mind to the new outlook.

CHAPTER XXXVII

UPON a Sunday morning in September, Kirk of habit rose early. He intended to make a solitary stroll along the edges of the moor, above the houses of the village. While he dressed, he was full of pure thought and a loving sense of Marian's presence in the house. As he stealthily descended the staircase, he said to himself—"Sleep on, dear tired one, thank goodness once more it is a day of rest."

Taking pains to make no disturbing noise, he very quietly unlocked, opened, and gently shut behind him the house door.

In the village, the windless early morning seemed buried and chilly with all-enveloping white mist, and the slate roofs were wet to trickling. The short grass was soaked and grey with dully glistening particles. The heads upon the tall newly-dead grass were bowed and loaded with cold dew; they hung down quite still, in the grey morning. As Kirk ascended he perceived overhead a tinge of blue. The mist was slowly lifting; the hidden sun seemed to be melting the almost moveless vapour that hung round him.

By and by there came a muffled peaceful cackling of hens, from the little hidden cotes in the stony corners of the bare pasture-fields. Though the glow of June and July sun, though the rich heat of August, and the time of countless flowers in the wind-caressed mowing grass had passed away, yet to Kirk all was still beautiful. He looked at the dark small trees, stunted and battered, that made protection round a little grey farm-stead. The moisture glistened on the holly-bushes, on the red wickie-berries of the mountain ash, and on the yellowed leaves of a strong hawthorn. He stooped and with his fingers touched the moveless grasses, saying to

himself, "The dear Earth meditates, after all her pure labours."

When he re-entered the house he met Marian. They glanced and smiled at each other. She looked girlish, rested, fresh; her cheeks were slightly flushed, unusual grace filled her. She was transfused by the pure idealism of her lover. In each other's presence they felt mutually uplifted, devout, and Kirk had made that wonderful discovery that comes to all men who love ideally—that pure love is the great enemy of physical desire—that love surpasseth all things. No direct word of their feelings had so far passed between Kirk and Marian, but by natural telepathy, by meetings of their eyes, by subtlest trifles, by that extraordinary knowledge in the presence of each other, they knew their mutual love.

This bleak country, so sparse of tree and flower, spread with dark moors, delved into, quarried, smoke-begrimed, so deeply ravined by ugly crowded valleys, had transformed itself in Kirk's enchanted eyes, and summer from her eternal beauty had assisted greatly in the change.

Marian long had guessed why Kirk for two months past resolutely every evening shut himself in his room and worked for several hours. While they awaited the summons to breakfast, she and Kirk went outside and stood together on the paved space that overlooked the moors, and Kirk, averting his eyes, suddenly asked—

"Marian, how much money does it cost married people to live? . . . to live in a quiet way?"

The girl was so overcome that she could not speak for a moment, for, to her, his words were equal to an avowal. Kirk glanced at her, and spoke again.

"Young engineers get very little, until after they are about twenty-five. You remember, I told you this before? . . . Marian . . . at present I get only ninety pounds."

"Oh! . . . I thought you'd get about three pounds a week!"

Disturbed and humbled, Kirk paused, and replied in a depressed voice—"It is only about thirty-five shillings a week."

"I didn't mean anything, I'm so sorry, I could have bit me tongue off when I'd said it, people talk so, and Dinah said you'd be getting that; you mustn't mind what I said. Why! I think thirty-five is very good. There's lots get married and set up house on less than that. Look at the Chattertons, she's a B.A. of music now, and they'd only thirty shillings a week when they married! they lived in that little house by itself at Grindlestone and eh! they are a happy couple!"

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear that, Marian. . . ." He thought a minute and went on eagerly, "But I shall soon be getting more. You see there are lots of fellows who would actually envy me, being in charge of rather large works, at my age, and they'd be willing even to pay Mr. Bendigo a premium just to have the position,—for the sake of the experience, you know—but of course their parents are well-to-do and care about them—so really I'm rather lucky from an engineering point of view. Old Mr. Bendigo knows all about these things, so that really it was good of him to give me a salary when I joined him. You see he was quite poor when he was young, and he knows a fellow can live quite decently on ninety a year. Plenty of fellows don't finish serving their articles until they're twenty-two, so that you see I have a good chance of getting much better salary than other young engineers, by the time I'm twenty-five."

Marian replied warmly—

"I'm sure you will! Every one in Bruside says you'll get on."

"Do they really?" Kirk was quite surprised, and much pleased . . . but he had something more he must say.

"But, Marian, I think a man has no right to ask a girl to marry, until he has enough to keep her properly. Suppose after he had asked her, that he kept her waiting several years?

Supposing then, after all that waiting, he had still only a small salary. Suppose he found he was a failure. That would be such a dreadful thing. . . . It might prevent her—How could he . . . ?”

But Marian, glowing, interrupted eagerly—

“No, you don’t understand us at all. No girl minds waiting if he really loves her; why! that’s why half the engagements are long ones; nay! no girl minds waiting if she loves her man.”

“Really? Really? Is that true . . . ?” An intense relief and joy filled Kirk. . . . Oh, how pure and sweet was her presence, marriage with her seemed an incredible thing, that could never happen. He could only tell her he loved her. Should he tell her now? He would take her hand. . . . From his heart the words were rising to his lips—“Dearest, then will you wait for *me*?”—

“Ay, you two young folks!” called the irreverent Dinah, “we’re all sitting down! and your bacon’s getting cold, Marian.”

Kirk decided with joy to tell her, before evening, that he loved her, and to ask if she would wait for him and marry him.

For years past, each girl in rotation had taken her turn to stay in on the Sunday mornings, but to-day all three sisters dressed for church. There was some dispute as to whose day in it was to be. Kirk overheard the end of a conversation; Marian was speaking, hurriedly and persuasively,

“I know I did, Ruth, but I’ve not had Communion now for a month, and you might stop in just this morning.”

Ruth replied in her gentle calm way,

“You know it is not fair, Marian, but you can go if you wish, but you will remember I stayed in for you only two Sundays ago?”

“Did you? I’d forgot,” said Marian, irritated rather than ashamed. “But Jim’ll be back early, and then you

can go out a walk before dinner. I'll help when I come back." Marian in the hall finished putting on her gloves, and Ruth went towards the kitchen. The younger girls with Kirk and Jim set off for church.

This incident was painful to Kirk. It had seemed selfish of Marian. It was very painful—until he shut his eyes to it, as he had already done to other incidents, for such would have injured and altered the ideal he had built up, and that he now lived in so sensuously. To injure that would cause him pain intolerable. He was compelled to argue with himself as he walked to church—"She is not selfish, it is simply that she is *more sensitive*, she suffers more from this hard life, she is less used to it, she suffers far more than do the others, from the lack of change and happiness and fresh air. But Ruth has grown quite used to things, and she has her religious absorption to support her; she is a combination of a nun and of that Martha in the Bible. Dinah is case-hardened and material, and very strong in body and light in heart. But Marian is . . . is physically much more sensitive than these others—that explains much."

Kirk by himself returned from church, leaving the Butterworths who stayed for Communion. Hours of divine service were early at Bruside, and by twelve he heard Marian, Jim and Dinah enter the house. They all came into the room in which Kirk sat reading, and Jim addressed him.

"Will tha' go with Dinah and me a little walk afore dinner, Mr. Clinton?"

"Yes, I would like it!" replied Kirk. He closed his book and jumped up.

"Where shall we go?"

"Let's go to Morscarn Clough!" exclaimed Marian. "It's close to, and ever so sweet, I think it's like your old south!"

She smiled at Kirk, and as they entered the hall they met Ruth, who was fully dressed and just drawing on one glove.

Marian's face clouded and she began to pass her sister and go towards the door.

Suddenly hysterical, her face distorted, Ruth turned and seized Marian's arm.

"You're not going out! You shan't!" suffocatingly cried she. She held her sister convulsively. Marian, infuriated, dragged her along, they struggled together.

"Loose me! Loose me!" cried Marian and gripped Ruth's hair. She tore it down and pulled savagely.

Profoundly shocked Kirk yet instantly seized the long dark hair above Marian's hand and prevented further pain. He parted the two quickly, but as gently as he could.

Ruth, sobbing hysterically, was led upstairs by Dinah. Marian followed them.

Jimmie, greatly upset, exclaimed:

"Aw'm reet ashermed! ay! ar'm that ashermed . . . Mesther Clinton! If 'a wer thee, a'd ha' nowt to do wi' ony o' them. Tha't a fool if tha' dooes! There! Ar've said it! . . ."

A week later Kirk was walking rapidly down hill towards the works. There were dark rings under his eyes, and he drew short insufficient breaths as he looked down aimlessly, first to right and then to left, in the bright morning. Then he glanced upward.

"Oh God.—The lark has no joy for me, will never again have joy for me."

He dropped his head again, thinking for the hundredth time of what had happened. How terrible it appeared. He was full of grief and sick apprehension. What had he done? He had made her love him for ever, and now these frightful feelings against her filled him. "Oh God! do I hate her because of that? What can I do? What can I do? Oh! Marian! Marian! Marian! why did you do that horrible thing?"

"——I can't go on the works," cried he to himself, his

heart contracting, all in front of him going black. He turned off into a lonely bridle-path that led up to the moors.

“Ah! I’ve felt it at moments before, this awful feeling against her, but I never thought it would come to this. Ah; I can’t have lost everything? this is despair, despair. Oh I can’t live, what will she do? It will kill her. Oh me—how can *I* be inconstant? Surely it is not *me*, to be *inconstant*. If it is I cannot live.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

BUT there were tenacities and fixities powerful in Kirk of which he himself as yet was unaware. The quarrel upon the Sunday, when two months had passed away, seemed faint and long ago. He had recovered a part of his ideal of Marian, and the girl herself was in a long and unusual mood of meekness, humbleness, and doglike regret. She stayed in oftener than she need have done for Ruth and showed a repentance that Kirk during his now very fickle moods of joy magnified into lovely conduct. But he was no longer happy or filled with dreams. Again and again he was greatly disturbed, alarmed acutely, to find himself criticising the girl he had so loved. When such feelings came he put them violently away and cried fiercely to himself, "*I will love her!*"

The effects of her coarse English upon his newly sensitive ear he resolutely defied. And he excused her and tried with varying success to make himself blind to her shortcomings. Consciously he shut his eyes to the furtive friction that he now detected between the sisters, and he endeavoured again to smooth things. He brought them presents of chocolates and dainties they could not afford, and, after seeing his extreme surprise and regret—not to say grief—when there had been a semi-quarrel over the division of these good things, the two younger sisters curbed their natural inclinations and had their fierce disputes in his absence.

Upon a December evening, early in the month, Kirk had walked out with Ruth and Marian.

The road was hilly, the night very dark, and the fields and moorlands lay still and silent beneath intense frost. A

white shroud of mist filled the deep valleys beneath them. The mighty constellations hung in space overhead, gleaming and glittering with a preternatural brilliance.

As Kirk and the two sisters began to walk down a short hill Marian slipped but Kirk caught her arm and saved her from a fall.

"Why! it is all ice!" cried he, looking closely at the road and seeing faint reflections. He took an arm of each sister firmly inside his own. For two months past he had not done this with Marian. It seemed a dear arm that he held again, tenderly pressed against his side; she was much weaker than he; he could feel her girl's form touch him; he walked with sure feet, ready for a slip; again and again he saved them, even when they all three slid together. He had learned to keep his knees bent for a slip in his many geological wanderings over rough ground, and in those solitary fishing trips to Wales, when he covered long tracks up and down mountain and over wild country, often for hours after night had fallen—and then, too, he was a good skater.

On level ground he did not loose their arms. After being silent, he bowed his head a little between them, walked very slowly, drew them close, and said in a low and sweet voice—

"You two will never quarrel again?" He heard Marian draw in her breath; then Ruth spoke.

". . . It wasn't all Marian . . . it was my fault; you mustn't think hardly of her; she wanted to go, so much, because . . . because . . . she is much younger than me."

"Ay, you are good, Ruth," said Marian in a stifled voice, "you know it was me. . . . I'll never, never, do nothing like that again." The tears flew into Kirk's eyes, for he knew Marian was crying, he gently found her hand and clasped it in his own.

CHAPTER XXXIX

KIRK felt a proud affection for Mary as they walked through Bruside near a cold sundown just before Christmas. It was a youthful and boyish pride—and might have told him that this unknown village occupied far too important a place in his life and consciousness.

Mary had grown remarkably pretty, and she knew how to dress. Her jet black hair and eyes, her lovely little ears, the bright colour in her cheeks, her handsome furs and becoming fur toque, her easy elegant carriage of herself as she walked—all attracted great attention.

"Kirk dear! How very funny they are."

"Who?"—asked he, smiling.

"Why, the Butterworth girls and all these queer rough people. But they're so kind and hospitable and respectful . . . and though they do stare so, one feels it's . . ."

"Admiration?"

"Don't be personal, Kikkie."

"Oh, I like their good taste. You *have* become pretty, old girl, and no mistake!"

"Have I . . .?"

"You know you have!" laughed her brother. "And how you managed to get these nice things out of the old man I don't know!"

They walked on some two miles while Mary told Kirk of Severnly and home—it seemed far away now, to him. Then her thoughts returned to Bruside.

"I wish the youngest Miss Butterworth wouldn't wear that dreadful fringe—she's such a nice girl, she'd be quite good-looking if it were not for that."

"Oh, I rather like it now, I think it suits her."

"Well, I don't, dear—and she has such lovely hair—a kind of pale goldish, quite uncommon, and so rich, and thick, I get quite tired of my own raven locks."

"Do you think you are a good judge of women, Mary?"

"What a queer question, my dear!"

"—I think I take more interest in women, now, than I once did; I like to study them. What do you think of Dinah?—The little pretty one—"

"Why! I hardly know them, yet, Kirk . . . but they all seem very kind."

"Yes, they are, aren't they? How do you like Marian—the youngest?"

"Well, I have noticed her—there's something rather nice, very faithful about her, Kirk, I should say."

"I thought you'd like her best, I knew you would, I do myself. She's so pure-looking . . . and lovable, and open
—"

"But of course, dear, I think you seem rather too friendly with a girl of her station," said his sister.

"You forget, Mary, that you are in the wildest of the West Riding; you are not in an old county-family county of the Feudal period!—and this is the Martineau's house, Mary; you will so like his music."

Kirk opened the gate and they went up the stone-slabbed path to the door. Mrs. Martineau opened it herself, smiling enquiringly. Kirk introduced his sister—

"I said I would bring her when she came, you remember, to see you and hear your husband play Heller."

The house outside was the ordinary grim square-built house, of coldly greenish-yellow grit-stone. The door jambs, the sills, the lintels, the plinth-course, all were of tough sawn stone, square, naked, and destitute of softening arris or the masons' rude art of ornament. The house was built to stand the annual eight months of continuous severe weather. The slates were cropped close as possible at eaves and gables, and bound down with rows of iron cramps. The garden was a

patch of grimed and beaten grass, divided by the washed slab path. The big road in front was heavily setted, flagged and curbed. And just as it did to-night—the wind shrilled and yelled during two-thirds of the year through the telegraph wires, that stretched thick and taut from monster pole to monster pole as far as one could see. The most familiar noise upon this road was the deep humming as one passed each pole, the most familiar smell the odour of the creosote upon them. The keen and clever minds that drove the great mills and works, the multitudes of commerce, hourly poured their busy thoughts through these dense skeins of wire.

But how quiet it was inside this small house! The furniture was Sheraton, and genuinely old; the inmates spoke the Southern English—so sweet and cultured to the ears of Kirk—for ever he remained a sensitive impressionist, in a strange land, throughout his Northern sojourns.

Mr. Martineau was long since booked a failure, by his relatives. He had taken but a poor degree. He was proud and sensitive, and spoke little. He had no money when he married, and he had married very young. His son and daughters had long gone out into the world to do what they could. Their father had come in time to live and settle down among these misty pikes and lows; and for many years had been organist in the Parish Church at Hephthwaite—he also taught at the Technical Schools, and thus he earned his living.

Mrs. Martineau was gray, thin, fifty, and always cheerful, kindly and refined.

Her husband with Kirk sat down and for some time talked desultorily of books. Mary and Mrs. Martineau sat together in a corner of the small drawing room—it was a treat for Mrs. Martineau to meet one of equal breeding in this desert of uncouthness, and Mary was a first-rate chatterer.

At last Kirk came over to them smiling, and stooped over his sister—"You mustn't talk the whole evening away, old girl, or he won't play for us—do stop her, Mrs. Martineau!"

Mary was genuinely surprised, and sat rapt, while the gray haired man played, with great devotion. She had not taken Kirk's description seriously. Certainly, by his unique interpretation he seemed to prove his belief absolutely true—that Heller was a great genius, neglected, misunderstood, and had come to die of starvation in a Paris garret. Mr. Martineau asserted that Heller sounded the profoundest depths of thought and feeling. But Kirk thought Martineau the genius,—that the player was greater than the music.

Mary, girlishly enthused, offered warm praise but was chilled by the polite absolute passivity and impenetrability of Mr. Martineau.

When Mary and Kirk rose to go Mrs. Martineau spoke to him—

“Are you quite comfortable, Mr. Clinton, at Mrs. Gishburn's?”

“Oh yes, thank you.”

“I can never remember all her daughters—there are three, I think, are there not? They work at the mill?”

“Yes,” said Kirk, several times, punctuating her queries and putting on his coat in the hall, under the bright incandescent light.

“The youngest is rather nice looking, isn't she? What is her name?”

“Marian, I think,” said Kirk, with a kind of wary resentment, for he had caught Mary's dark glance, and the similar acute interrogation of Mrs. Martineau.

The brother and sister walked back almost in silence. Those little sentences seemed to reveal to Kirk that what he thought his deep secret was somehow suspicioned on.

CHAPTER XL

KIRK unexpectedly had been comforted, and his resolutions much strengthened, by his sister's liking for Marian. Without admitting it to himself, he had feared criticism, suspicion; and if he could he would have put off the visit. But having for months spoken so frequently to the Butterworths of his sister, and after rousing in Mary a keen anticipation of her visit, he had not had the heart to stop her coming, and he was still too truthful to have told Mrs. Gisburn that his sister could not come. Mary, shy as a bird about herself, had not confided to her brother that she was in love, and, indeed, about to be engaged. Perhaps it would be on Christmas Day!

A few days later, as Kirk returned from seeing her away he once more felt joyous and light-hearted, for that beautiful pure feeling of affection, of love, surged back into him. He talked much, and was very gay at tea-time; and with his eyes and manner he had said to Marian, as he entered the bright-lit room, "*I do love you, I do love you.*"

After tea, Dinah rose quickly from the table, went into the hall while no one observed, and brought back a little twig of mistletoe. She held it over Kirk's head and stooped and kissed his cheek. His youthful blood leaped even while he resented the familiarity. Overturning his chair he chased her, flew round the room, seized the mistletoe, nearly caught her, and she screamed as she escaped and dashed upstairs. Ruth, open-eyed and half-smiling up at him, was promptly kissed, Kirk laughing as he did so, and the thought flashed through him that he must kiss Marian.

"All right, Dinah"—said Kirk breathlessly—"Come down,

it's all over," and he sat down. Mrs. Gisburn in a state of dismayed amusement had joined her hands as if in prayer and exclaimed with astonishment—

"Ay! Ay! Mr. Clenton! How can ye? Gurls! Whatever would his sister think of it!" . . . Kirk caught Dinah instantly as she arrived at the stair-foot and after a little struggle kissed her soundly. Only half the twig remained and his hand was stickied with the berries. He had no wish to do this with Marian, and he hesitated, pretending breathlessness, but Dinah was laughing:—"Look out, Marian! He's after you!"—and Marian herself was moving away, glancing at him with a strange, flushed, alluring, yet resentful look, and the moment his own eyes met and mingled with hers a peculiar feeling shot through himself. He chased her round the room, chairs falling over, Jim and Dinah loudly laughing; he pursued her into the hall, into the best parlour; she doubled out again; twice he met her eyes as she slipped his hand; she roused a feeling he had never known, and he cornered her in the dim hall; she fell on her knees, turned from him and held her face in her hands; he, too, was on his knees and he seized her hand, took it from her face, overbalanced and fell against her as he kissed her. Their faces were perforce a moment pressed hard together as he kissed her. The sticky juice was on her face and hair; he was laughing uncomfortably as he withdrew his left hand out of the middle of her bosom and regained his balance, but Marian's face convulsed, and she spat upon his forehead. None saw it.

He stood up, dazed, dismayed, slowly wiping his face with his handkerchief, attempting and attempting to analyse what he had done to Marian. He heard her voice speaking defiantly and tearfully.

"You shouldn't have hurt me like that."

The girl went quickly past him, and upstairs. On her bed she sat down, her knees wide apart, her face hidden in her hands, and she broke into hard silent sobbing. Her heart palpitated terribly, and she thought with agony, "Oh, he'll

not love me, he never loved me, he'll never want me now, I wish I were dead, I hate all men and my own feelings, too, I wish I was dead, I wish I was dead."

Kirk had no experience or conception of a too-sensual love. To him, Marian's act was inexplicable: horrifying. Kirk had never seen the mare kick the stallion. Nor even had he seen it, could he possibly have brought so gross a touchstone to a human being—above all, to a girl. He had never realised those deep roots of love that grow down in the earthly and the physical. He had looked only on the sweet flowers that crown the stems, and aspire to heaven.

In the night Kirk dreamed Marian came to his bedside and looked down at him with that strange look. He started up in bed, wide awake, his teeth clenched. Fiercely he thrust out this vision from his mind.

CHAPTER XLI

BROUGH invariably spent the first few days of Christmas holiday with Mr. Bendigo, and the remainder with his own family. He had for years been regarded by the old man as a prospective son-in-law. At one time Brough had himself thought this possible, but he was in no hurry, he desperately disliked being tied in any way, and first one daughter, and then another, and finally the youngest daughter of the old man had become engaged to other men, and had married. But Brough from long habit continued to visit Mr. Bendigo at Christmas, and often he was semi-seriously chafed by the old man for not taking to himself a wife. Privately, Mr. Bendigo was much disappointed in this matter. The husband of his youngest daughter had not been a success, and the father now contributed to the household expenses of the daughter.

While Kirk spent his Christmas in the north, Brough as usual dined on Christmas Day with the Bendigos. Immediately the midday dinner was over, the nephews—to Brough's great relief—went off skating. Mr. Bendigo over the wine and walnuts was once more twitting Brough, who laughingly replied,

"But I'm not a marrying man, Sir, though I very nearly did it once. . . . Do you recollect that little work you sent me down to in Sussex, ten or twelve years ago, Mundenhurst? . . . Well, I lived with a widow and her daughter; she was a pretty little thing."

"What, the widow?"

"No, Sir!" laughed Brough. "No fear! I meant the daughter, and I tell you, Sir, I fell in love with her, the only

time in my life!—and I kept in love, too,—until I found she had two children by the local policeman!”

“Really! Shocking! How shocking, Brough.” Old Mr. Bendigo had raised his eyebrows, and gazed seriously at Brough.

“Yes; it was rather shocking—to me,” said Brough, drily, thinking the old man had no sense of humour, for Brough had intended this little story as a prelude. Absently he fingered the stem of a wineglass. He had never quite lost his first youthful constraint in the company of Mr. Bendigo. He was quite unaware that he still used the respectful “Sir”; nor was he conscious that with Mr. Bendigo he avoided instinctively that habitual irony and drawl.

“We shall have to think about some one to take charge of the Whitdale bridge,”—said he, at length.

“Yes,” said Mr. Bendigo, musingly, somewhat pre-occupied, “yes. . . . Charlie hasn’t much to do at Dover; he might go down there?”

“I think that would not do, Sir; it will be an awkward contract in some ways,—a difficult piece of work—and he doesn’t know the north, a beastly place Whitdale, I don’t think Charlie’s strong enough for that climate, Sir.”

“Oh! oh! . . . oh, you think so, Brough?”

“Well, if Charlie did come north, I suppose he would have to be under me, and in that case I think it would be far better to send young Clinton to Whitdale, and let Charlie try and carry on at Bruside; it’s fairly plain sailing there, now, and I could look him up easily, say once or twice a week, that is, of course, if Charlie did come north.”

“. . . You know, Brough, you don’t make the best out of Charlie.”

“. . . I think it might be a good thing to let Clinton go somewhere else now, Sir.”

“Why? why? I don’t see that, Brough. I don’t see your point. Leave well alone. He’s made good friends with the other side, we have never had less trouble with a contract

... and I may tell you, Brough, Bruside has paid us better than any other work, this last year. Why take him away? Why take him away? . . . What's the amount of Whitdale?"

"About sixteen thousand, including the steel-work."

"Humph, I thought it was more. We can't start before March."

"Well, that's only two months away, Sir."

The old man did not reply. He had suddenly dismissed the subject. He puffed away at his cigar; he had some pleasant news in keeping for Brough.

He looked with satisfaction at the younger man.

"Brough, I am becoming an old man."

"Oh! do you think so, Sir!" smiled Brough, genuinely incredulous. But Mr. Bendigo slowly waved the denial aside as he arose. In the dark furniture he unlocked a drawer and brought to the table an important-looking document.

"The better the day the better the deed," said he sententiously. He had not the least notion that he had made a pun. He gave a parchment to Brough and bade him read it.

Glancing through the short deed, Brough learnt he was to be manager and director in the south, and that himself, Mr. Bendigo, and his two nephews, would enter into partnership. The terms for Brough were generous. The new order of things would commence in some six months' time.

He was exceedingly surprised, and very gratified.

The old gentleman re-filled the glasses, and they drank success to "James Bendigo—Limited."

After twenty minutes' conversation, Brough had entered into a new relationship with his chief, and Clinton's name coming up by chance he at once spoke more freely of him; his heart was warmed by his own good future and success, and by the wine. Further, he was moved sincerely by an affectionate interest in Kirk's welfare.

"You take an interest in him, I know, Sir . . . I knew you

did . . . yes, between you and me, Sir, he's worth five times what he gets, but he's too modest to ask for more."

Mr. Bendigo laughed quickly and spoke—"Brough, Brough, you are young, you must see with me as regards salaries. I was thirty years of age before I rose to three pounds a week. It's good for young men to live sparingly, and learn the value of money. I dislike these sudden American methods. He's getting excellent experience, and I may tell you that his father asked me to, ah—to . . . I don't remember the exact words; but he wished his son to live, ah, very quietly, until he had come to years of discretion."

". . . . A queer thing for a father to do?"

"A little unusual perhaps; his father is rather eccentric,—but a very sound engineer."

"Well," continued Brough,—"Aikrigg tells me that Clinton is seen about a good deal with some girl in Brusidè. In fact he fears Clinton may become entangled. . . . I think there's something in it, otherwise Aikrigg would not have spoken."

"What! What's this, Brough? Clinton? Surely no! I feel convinced he is a most exemplary lad. A strict father, a strict upbringing, mother a very pious woman, a very fine woman. I'm a reader of character, Brough, you know it. I feel you're mistaken. Mere gossip—who is this Aikrigg? Not the stone man?"

"Yes, Sir, the stone man, and a very decent shrewd chap he is. Man of few words, well thought of down there."

"Poo-poo! Surely Clinton's not such a fool?—besides, he's a bit too much of a gentleman, yes, he's too much of a gentleman to ruin a girl, too much of a gentleman."

"No, Sir, yet you are right; that is just the rub, in fact, don't you see, Sir? If Aikrigg is right—Clinton would marry the girl. As you have just said, Clinton's not the other sort; he is a bit too much the honourable fine-gentleman."

"Oh, oh. . . ." The old man showed his disappointment,

his perplexity, and his great brows twitched as he looked at Brough, who spoke again—

“But I could not forgive myself, Sir, if I injured him with you. But this is, to some extent, why I suggested he should go to Whitdale. It’s a difficult piece of work too . . . very difficult, quite beyond Charlie. It’s no good whatever, in my small experience, Sir, to speak to a youngster on the subject of women. I tell you, I nearly married that little minx down at Mundenhurst; and I don’t consider myself altogether a fool, and young Clinton is a Trojan at work, he has real talent, gets on with his men, and I never have to go near him. It would be such a mess . . . from all points of view.”

Bendigo and Brough were both temperate drinkers but to-day they had each taken more wine than usual. The old man felt quite fatherly now the position was shown to him.

“Brough,” said he putting a hand on his companion’s arm, “do you inquire at once. Sound the boy yourself. I can’t think that this Aikrigg is right; it’s mere gossip; it must have shown in his work. . . . Yes, it would have shown in his work. . . . I must not let him go wrong like that, we might lose a good youngster, and . . . ah . . . I feel a real responsibility . . . sound him, sound him! and write privately to me. . . . No, no, oh, no, I agree that they do want looking after. Ah no, but I thought the boy different, greater common-sense. You did very well to tell me . . . if we must move him . . . you say it’s all plain sailing now, Bruside?”

“Apple-pie order, not even a cement bag lying about! I was at Bruside a week ago. He’s done very well indeed.”

“Tut-tut! it’s half past three! what? Come out a little before it grows dark, my boy, I want to show you the new Clydesdale, a grand fellow, a grand horse!”

As they put on their coats in the hall Mr. Bendigo began to laugh heavily, his eyebrows twitched as he took hold of Brough’s arm.—“But if we give him a rise now, *he’d run off and get married, the young dog!*” and they went out laughing.

CHAPTER XLII

MARCH had passed, the dark hills again had been covered through the long nights with creeping lines of fire. The earliest days of April had been blue and scented with the moorland smoke. Again was heard the larks' fitful song in the windy cloudy skies; and May approached as of old.

But Marian suffered an agony of grief concealed, for Kirk still had not spoken; and at times he showed even a coldness towards her. Kirk himself had suffered, was suffering, a revulsion, the loss of self-respect, a deep abasement, the loss of love, and was now at death-grip with his honour—the sole virtue it seemed to him that he retained. That which he daily and nightly brooded on distractedly—and could not decide upon—was, should he marry her? or, should he go away and kill himself? If he married her, he would save the girl; if he killed himself, he would escape from this horrible life, and the miserable selfish animal he had discovered in himself would die, and he would be at rest in oblivion from his inconstancy and grief.

But that would kill Marian; for she, he was quite certain, would kill herself unless he comforted her.

Repeatedly he had been on the point of offering her marriage, but each time, at the crucial moment, the insincerity of it shocked and revolted his nature. He could not begin to say the lie, "I love you"; and yet he could not terminate their relations for that was too great a selfishness and cruelty. To leave her was to kill her. He of all men could not bring himself to break a girl's heart. Honour and cowardice, selfishness and self-sacrifice, waged in him an exhausting, relentless, ceaseless fight, night and day. He had no single

minute's peace of mind except when he slept heavily; but the awakenings were each anguished. His work was intensely distasteful, all human beings were distasteful to him; he was silent, almost morose, and fearful of himself he feverishly filled his spare time up with work in which he took a fictitious and goaded interest.

By her secret distress Marian became chastened in body and spirit. She was pale and thinner, less fleshy, less physical, and therefore more attractive to a man of Kirk's temperament. As he watched her, how desperately he fought at times to recover that lovely ideal in which the girl had once lived; but instead, an intense pity grew in him, replacing to some extent the drear void left by that departed, high, beauteous physical-sensuous love. He sorrowed acutely as can only the young over the loss of his exquisite-seeming love. He had lost with it his feeling of irresistible strength and honour, and every vestige of that love, ecstasy, and joy in nature. He had lost all. The first song of the little hedge-bird had pierced him, it had pierced him through and through with grief.

Thought of escape often found entrance in him despite himself, and then he wished indeed that the Whitdale work had been given to him. He had even begun to pack up his things, when the countermanding telegram arrived telling him to remain at Bruside. But at each recollection he remembered that he would, that he must perforce, have spoken to Marian before he went.

Many times he cried out in secret to himself, "Oh God! why am I wretched and fickle? why am I inconstant? Oh God! is she not pure? affectionate? and good? Ah, why was I given that great, great power of loving, only to have it taken from me?"

His depression was communicated to the household. Intuitively they knew somewhat of the desperate conflict in his

soul, and they furtively watched the lovers; even to Dinah was borne in the nearness of some tragedy.

Marian's body had often been much affected by her mind. Of late she had done her work ill, and week by week she showed greater exhaustion. Several times in March the over-looker had spoken roughly to her—this had never before occurred; and now for weeks George Sutcliffe, watching his work-people pass the turnstile in the cold bitter mornings, had ceased to give Marian that customary "Good morning, lass," that he reserved for the old hands and the better-class girls. Dinah had jeered, first behind Marian's back and then openly, because her sister's earnings were much below the average—but her real motive was that secret jealousy which burned on in her each time she detected Kirk giving any special attention to her sister.

All were paid by piece-work, and instead of bringing home the usual twenty-two to twenty-six shillings Marian for weeks had put into her mother's hands on Saturdays sums so small as seventeen shillings. The girl concentrated herself in concealment. She had as an impressionable child ingested from her stepmother and environment a strength of hard and sullen pride, and this now alone upheld her. The change in her health had been so gradual that Kirk by an extraordinary blindness failed to see except in part how much this passionate girl was suffering through himself. On a Saturday late in March she had come in some time behind the others, and she put her wages into Mrs. Gisburn's hands, not looking at her—but painfully speaking—

"I can't help it, Mother."

The hard old woman was touched for once and said kindly and very unexpectedly,

"Never mind, Marian, my lass, get your tea."

The girl went hastily into the kitchen, forced back the tears, carefully wiped her eyes, looked fearfully at her face in the little glass, and then came in again outwardly composed but with despair in her soul. No one should ever know what

she felt. She would have to drown herself in the lodge. She had gone to do it after Jim Thornaber, to whom she was then engaged, had suddenly insulted and deeply hurt her, but Dinah had run hard after her and brought her back. . . . "Ah," thought she, "Dinah wasn't bad then. Now there isn't one I can ever tell."

As occurs so frequently in the North, winter suddenly returned. On April the fifth—a Friday—the soiled and trodden snow, the frozen slush, formed a hard crust in the main street of Bruside. The moors all around were again white, and the frost was so extreme that Kirk's work was brought practically to a standstill. Late in the afternoon he finished at the office, and, unwilling to return home, he went up on to the moors, walking along miserable and aimless until the night fell round him. His mind was in a state of stupor. Sirius began to scintillate splendidly in the South, the deep valleys filled with cold mist though overhead all was clear and cloudless, and the full moon had risen in the East. Kirk with distracted eyes saw the treads of feathered feet left by the grouse, and he saw the exquisite crystals glittering like diamonds on the round slope of snow that he ascended. He slipped, falling to his knees. He remained on his knees, his hands in the snow. In that attitude of supplication he cried out silently the burden of his feelings. "Oh, mother! Oh, good spirits! if you exist; Oh, God of Sirius! if you exist, Oh, powers greater than myself! if you exist—force me to do right, force me on, spare me nothing, force me against my wretched will."

He remained there, paralysed in mind, unable to move for some minutes. Consciousness of the futility of expecting help and guidance from the starry void, from anything, or any being—returned into his mind. He slowly regained his feet and stood questioning himself.

"How *can* I marry a pure woman if I don't love her? If she found out it would break her heart, just the same, just

the same . . . as if I went away now." He shrank as he imagined himself saying to her words of love that he did not feel.

As he went slowly downwards towards the village lights, a new idea came to him and he stood still, eagerly holding it.

"But if I do not love her, how could I be so terribly troubled? If I do not love her, why can I not *bear* to see her hurt? nor *endure* the idea of deserting her? I know nothing. . . . Oh God! if you do exist, I *humbly* implore you to help me."

"Perhaps it is all only horrible thoughts that I am troubled by?" A wild gleam of hope filled him once more as he returned to the house. But, by the following evening, this fitful hope had died away, and he was the worse for it. He came home again, depressed and morose.

The frost continuing had made weaving difficult, for the air was so dry. Marian's looms had been stopped again and again since early morning. She had been stooping over them all day. She remained behind a few minutes, after the mill had stopped. The severe pain in her back which had troubled her more and more during the past weeks had become acute during this afternoon. The frequent stooping, the lack of any rest, the mental anguish, had much aggravated the pain, and by herself she walked stoopingly towards home.

Physical miseries are all the harder to bear when we are in sorrow. As she neared home she had to cross a piece of glassy road on which no ashes had been thrown. She fell and severely bruised her hip, but got up again as soon as she could, for two bullet-headed boys were laughing at her. The added pain and their lack of sympathy brought tears into her dry suffering eyes. She entered the house. A little snow clung to her dress where her hip had struck the stone-paved road. She passed through the large room on her way to the stairs. She did not see Kirk sitting there by himself—but

the look upon her face had stricken him. As he heard her slow steps on the staircase, the whole of his selfish thoughts left him and he was filled only with that divine pity, that strong manhood and putting away of the self that is so akin to love. A serene goodness filled him as he asked himself with astonishment,—

“What on earth do *I* matter? What can I have been thinking all this time? It’s so marvellously plain! It’s given to me to take care of Marian all her life! I’m utterly unworthy of her—she is so pure, that was why she did that,—she felt my horrible feeling, I did not recognise it, she’s absolutely innocent, and didn’t know what she hated, but I can and I will look after her materially.”

The consummation of marriage, pure and natural solely for those who truly love,—he would not and could not imagine. The plain thing now was to save her from this cruel life, and comfort her.

The evening meal delayed a little for himself was nearly over. Mrs. Gisburn was eager and impatient to begin the weekly minute and laborious house-cleaning on which she so prided herself. There was much to be done. It would take till eleven to-night and the best part of Saturday afternoon and evening to get all done. Supported grimly by Kirk the sisters last week had not polished the furniture; and certain numerous copper saucepans and metal dish-covers—seldom used—had not been polished—they had only been rubbed over with a cloth! The bedroom carpets had not been taken up as usual, to be shaken and beaten—sometimes by lamp-light—on the back paving, and these and other defects had lain heavily all the week upon Mrs. Gisburn’s mind. But she and Ruth had been so busy with the wash, with baking, with the entirely unneeded whitewashing of the cellars, and the back premises, that the furniture actually had been unpolished for an entire fortnight!—a neglect never before permitted. The upsetting of such a habit, a second nature built into Mrs. Gisburn by her own stern mother, affected her al-

most as deeply as a forgery would upset the conscience of an elderly respectable head bank-clerk. She scarcely ate her own meal and the moment Kirk finished and left the table, she stood up briskly and began to speak in a strong reproving voice—

“Come on, gurls, it’s Friday night, and th’ house in a fair mess right through; come on, every one of ye, Ruth and Marian get th’pots washed up quick; Mesther Clinton’ll not mind working in best parlour for a bit, I daresay.”

As she spoke, the sisters of habit and obedience began to stir reluctantly, but each face was weary. These grown people remained abjectly responsive to the commands of the woman who had always exerted ascendancy over them, from their motherless childhood.

Kirk had returned for a moment into the living-room to get something he wanted, but first he had thought for several minutes over the ridiculous waste of energy in keeping bright the polished surfaces of useless things merely out of vanity. He had read much socialistic writing of the Blatchford type, and from the whole he had taken to heart the argument that all furniture, walls, fire-grates, floors, utensils, etc., should be so made and painted as to require little or no precious human labour spending on them. Thus the human race would be saved some unnecessary toil, and be given more leisure for things that civilised and elevated. Mrs. Gisburn had always complaisantly received his arguments—it was just young men’s talk! Dinah on her knees in the large living room viciously polished the leg of an ordinary kitchen chair. Jim on the stepladder was handing down to his mother those absurd and never used brass pans and numerous extra dish-covers. Marian and Ruth were washing up on the large plain wood table. Marian had a white apron tied on, and she stooped painfully over the pan of hot water. She was extremely pale to-night and seemed strangely patient.

As Kirk re-entered unnoticed in the bustle, the strong

odour of furniture paste met him and he heard Dinah's savage remark as she looked up at Marian.

"Ye'll *have* to wash them and to-night, my lass! it's your turn, and I'm not going to do the spare room by meself to-morrow! it's her turn, mother, tell her."

"Wash what?" said Kirk sternly, his face hardening.

Dinah glanced at him suddenly.

"Why, th'lobby and th'floors."

Holding two wet plates in her hand Marian, standing in the same peculiar stooping attitude, began to speak hysterically, banging the plates feebly on the table, as it were to emphasise her words—

"I can't, do, any, more. I wish I was dead. I've—been on me legs, since five o'clock—and me back's—that bad—" She began to sob.

Kirk—quite infuriated—gently took her by the arm and seated her upon the sofa, he took the plates from her lap and threw them on the table; one broke.

"You idiotic woman! Do you value furniture more than the happiness of your daughters? Do you want them to hate you? Do you see they hate to hear your voice? Do you know what mill-work is? NO! you have never had any frightful weary day at it. You have not once entered a mill! Even I know more of these girls than you do. You are ruining their health, and their life, and their spirit,—with your damned furniture and fads."

She had drawn in her breath quickly, and her face had gone angry and irascible, but Kirk was angrier. His eyes had the stillness of command. He spoke—standing motionless—as he had done to truculent men—with the hard-grating brutality inherited from his father, with that natural inborn power of command, which, when exerted, is never disobeyed.

"No. Stop, woman.—Or they shall leave you."

Mrs. Gisburn sank backwards into a chair as though a bayonet threatened her.

He raised Marian to her feet, glanced at Mrs. Gisburn and said,

"Come into the front room, all but she." He held the door, and after the girls and Jim had passed through he locked it.

"Now you will rebel against this. It will not do one day longer. Sit down, Marian dear, lie down on the sofa. . . . I shall back you up. You have nothing to fear. If needful you will withhold your wages from her, and I will take charge of all money. But she will settle down into the new order in no-time. Meanwhile, *you will obey me.*

"I will improve things at once. Later—your step-mother will be glad, very glad. I am your friend. You know I feel very much for you, and wheresoever I am in future years I'll help you in trouble. And now to business."

He took from his pocket a small diary, looked for some blank pages, then put down the diary and obtained a piece of foolscap from the writing-table. Jim, so far acquiescent, caught his eye, laughed nervously, and spoke quietly—

"However tha't going to get ovver th'owd 'un, nay! Ar konno' tell! Tha's takken my breath away!"

Kirk looked up with a fierce smile.

"You'll see. And you, Ruth, don't be shocked. We are doing a right and just thing.

"Now, Ruth, first of all, I want a complete list of all that so far has been done weekly in the house. We'll take it in days—Monday first. I shall then cut out everything unneedful, and the rest will be divided between you, and be honourably done, without quarrelling or grumbling. Besides, each will know her exact time and work, and each will have but half as much to do, when I've done with it! Come on, Ruth, and you others check her." He looked round at Marian. Her eyes were shut.

"Never mind her, Mr. Clinton. I think Oo's asleep, it's just what t' lass wants," said Jim.

In about half an hour, after arbitration carried on in low voices between Ruth and Dinah and settled decisively point

after point by Kirk, each girl's division and rotation of house-work had been determined, and on the fly-leaf and blank pages at the front of his own pocket-diary, Kirk wrote a little time-table beneath each sister's name and one beneath his own. Certain scrubblings that fell to Marian had been struck out and booked to himself.

"Furniture will only be polished every six weeks," wrote Kirk. "That's a good reform," said he, reading it over with satisfaction, "and now we better make substitution rules."

This also was done, and Jim, his tepid socialism for once afire, delightedly added a word of advice—

"Well! you lasses! Mesther Clinton's knocked th'owd leddy longways! an' none hurt her, netther; it's t'best for all o'thee, her as much as ony. All thee's got to do is to mak a gradely job, an' t'hou'd fast like goom by they rools, an' each do thee bit fair an' square. If th'owd leddy says awt, tha's but got to ser, 'Mesther Clinton's med rool, and thee mun *set down* to it.' Er'll none go agen him, tha'll see! Her'll do more for Mesther Clinton than for ony o' ye!"

"As regards Marian's work," said Kirk, "I shall do most of it myself, while she is, as we can all see, so poorly and done up. It's my right to help any one of you, if you are not well, and I shall help you, Dinah, or you, Ruth, just the same if the need arises."

"But you can't do that!" said Ruth, at last speaking and much troubled. "Mother would never hear of it! and besides, I hope Marian would be too much ashamed to let you do such a thing, and——"

"Stop, Ruth! How can you or Mrs. Gisburn prevent me? . . . You must never again speak like that, it is not right."

Kirk smiled confidently. "And I have not asked Marian's leave, nor yours, and shall not do so. I do it because I choose to do it."

"But if some one comes in and sees you?" timidly asked Ruth.

"But they won't; I shall keep the door locked, and clear out while you open it—O full of thought!"

Jim and Dinah laughed. Dinah was intensely eager to see Kirk wash floors, to see if he could really continue to "get over mother," but Ruth felt quite mentally disordered.

"Now we shall attack your mother," said Kirk, standing up. "The attack will be simply obeying the new rules, and we shall begin now. To-night we will do the following work only."

During the next hour an extraordinary brisk cheerfulness animated those around Mrs. Gisburn. It was so odd to feel sorry for her in a humorous kind of way. She remained silent, taking no part, and sat there most of the time in a kind of stupor, and she watched Kirk while he did Marian's part and helped Ruth. At last she stood up, and began as it were humbly to assist her step-daughters.

CHAPTER XLIII

MARIAN was to remain at home for ten days for the sake of the change and partial rest obtainable, and Ruth would replace her at the mill. This was satisfactory to all, for the loss of six or seven shillings a week through Marian's poor weaving was a serious matter in their eyes, and Ruth was a good weaver.

Kirk himself stayed in next afternoon and he found that he could scrub floors, wash pots, polish furniture, etc., quite as well as any one.

A sudden and tremendous flood caused by heavy rain falling on quickly-melting deep snow rushed down the river for many hours on Sunday, and rose until midnight. Kirk had been sent for hastily at six o'clock that evening. Himself and every man available worked strenuously till three next morning and by their efforts prevented serious injury to the new unfinished river-wall, and to the new bridge. Fortunately they had abundant broken stone near at hand. With this material they pushed out here and there a temporary groin. These saved further damage and without doubt stopped destruction of the bridge. At one o'clock in the morning when the men were somewhat flagging, Kirk with permission from a handy police-inspector sent to a near-by public-house—and a quart of beer was soon served out all round, and the work went on quicker. Two hours later, Kirk, happy by reason of great effort successful in result, thought to himself, "I understand men better than I shall ever understand women . . . But I do understand one, and I shall propose to her to-morrow—no! to-day! of course."

He toiled up the long hill to Bruside. There was a deep relief in the prospect of setting Marian's heart at rest. He thought carefully what words he would use—"Marian, will you honour me by marrying me?" or "Marian dear, I am only poor, but I will make you happy; will you marry me?" The last he decided was the better. He let himself into the house with his latchkey.

To his surprise Mrs. Gisburn was sitting up, a fire burned brightly, and the table was laid for himself.

"Oh! Mrs. Gisburn! you should on no account have stayed up for me! You must be tired to death. Did you not get my message? Why! it's half-past three! I sent a messenger."

"I got message all-reet, but ye don't think I'd goo to bed and leave ye to come in all starved and wet, and no one to see to ye?"

"Why, it's very kind and thoughtful of you."

"Nay, . . . ye've said some cruel things to me . . . but I know men; ye'd have come in, and gone off to y'r bed all starved."

Kirk stood and looked down at the cloth. He spoke very persuasively and gently. "But isn't what I did for the best?"

She turned and stood stiffly by the fire, her straight upright back towards him, she was more deeply moved than he knew. At last she replied reluctantly:

"Ay . . . happen it's for t'best . . . I'm getting an owd woman."

"Why, of course it was for the best."

He took her hard hand in his own and drew her round to face himself as he spoke. "You were working your own self to death, as well as the girls. Why, you know you were!" Kirk began to smile.

"You know you were, and now you're glad a *man* stopped you!" She suddenly took his hand anew, and gripped it twice.

"Now you go to bed," said he.

Kirk slept until late in the morning. He was awakened by Mrs. Gisburn knocking and entering with a breakfast-tray. She put it upon a small table near him.

"I woke ye because it's none good for ye to lie so long wi'out meat. Ye can ring the little bell when ye've done, so me and Marian can wash pots up, and ye should lie in bed till middle o' the day."

Twenty minutes later, Kirk as he sat up listened, and felt certain he heard Mrs. Gisburn go out on some errand. With a beating heart he rang the bell and waited, he rang again, and then heard footsteps on the stair. The girl knocked. As she entered he beheld her pale thinned face, her wistful eyes endeavouring to smile at him ordinarily, and he was filled with an intense lovable impulse. "How could I *possibly* not have loved her?"

"Marian, you know I love you."

She came unsteadily across the room to the low bed and sank down on his breast, and like a big child she hid her face in his neck. Twice he kissed her flushed cheek. His arms were round her. Her bosom upon his: a strange new sensation for him. For a minute he was happy. Then Marian raised herself from him a little, saying in a kind of ashamed and low, but aggressive voice—

"I want a man who will kiss me."

A profound revulsion shocked Kirk—he thrust it out. He kissed her twice on the forehead, then on the lips. Again her head dropped on him. Now, indeed, it came upon him with great fear that he had done the terrible and irretrievable act. For, if he did not love her, he could not conceal it. His lips were dry, his face pale. By sheer strength of will he stroked her pale beautiful hair; but he felt as Judas, when he too gave the traitor's kiss. He saw into the future, it would break this girl's heart. But while she lay in his arms he strove with the uttermost power of soul and body to keep control—"She shall *not* find out. God! God! help me, she is your child!" Silently and defiantly he cried this. Then he

looked out distractedly over her hair, stroking it gently,—Ah—Ah—but he would not be able to face her when she knew. He could think of nothing but death, his own death. He could not live with his abominable heart. He felt all horribly contracted; his pulse scarcely beat. But he must speak.

“Are you happy, Marian?”

“Yes.”

Her voice was muffled, but unmistakably happy. Her arms faintly tightened round his neck. That was a great relief.

“I am very clever, I have not deceived in my life, but I have immense power to do so, and now I will, I *must* and I *will*, deceive even this girl.” A sudden alternative presented itself. He thrust it away. “She shall never know, never! never!—or else I’ll shoot us both.”

They had not heard Mrs. Gisburn come in below. Twice she had called Marian; now she was coming upstairs. Marian moved to withdraw from Kirk, but he firmly held her hand as her step-mother stood at the door. Marian was very embarrassed, but Kirk said with a strongly forced smile and a calmer voice,

“We are engaged, Mrs. Gisburn.”

“How old do ye think she is, Mr. Clinton?” Mrs. Gisburn asked this painfully and gravely.

Kirk smiled strangely as he looked from Marian to her mother.

“She’s nigh on twenty-eight,” said Mrs. Gisburn. Marian did not move.

“... Well? What of that?” Nothing further could surprise him, or, rather, affect him, in his state of mind.

“I’ve told ye. She’s six years your elder.”

“I don’t care if she is.”

CHAPTER XLIV

THE night following upon the day of his engagement was terrible to Kirk. He had no sleep. He lived through the hours minute by minute, overwhelmed by the fear of his own thoughts—

“I have deceived her. She will find out. It will kill her. I’ve broken a girl’s heart.” For hours he turned wretchedly on his bed and thought of suicide, rejecting it, re-contemplating it.

“I have killed her. I can’t go through it again. I’ve done the worst sin there is! I cannot face her.”

He feared greatly the coming day, the forced horrible renewal of sacrilege, the pretence of love, the agony of concealment, the inevitable disaster that must happen when she knew what was in his heart; he feared like one of those who has undergone horrible physical torture, and who lies through the night with spoilt limbs and nailless hands; with the fearful, ever-present recollections of the extreme moments of agony. He lay in dead fear, like one of these—awaiting the footsteps of the torturers who will come with daylight.

But towards dawn his hyper-sensitive fears and feelings were less acute; for they were become numbed, worn out for the time, and were replaced by the profoundest apathy and sadness.

The cocks began to crow. Inexorably another day had arrived. The sound of distant crowing had always made Kirk full of sadness. Dawn in the most wretched districts, in black manufacturing regions, is broken always by the crowing of cocks—cramped up in grimy back yards and miserable hopelessly-trodden runs, where the birds live out their wretched lives. Even amid the hills and downs of the

South, the distant crowing rising into the pure dawn from solitary farms, in the silent early morning, had often, in Kirk's mind, seemed to belong to the endless toil of mankind, the heavy pressure of existence; the forced labour, the un-rested limbs again dragged painfully from the heavy sleep of blessed night, the banishment of all sweetness, the dark separation of human life from the beautiful ordered harmony of the heavens, the seasons, the flowers, the forests, the sea in many colours. For us, dawn was but the renewal of strife, the re-saddling of the sore unhealed back. It was in this heavy spirit that he languidly and nervously arose and dressed.

But youth and health were still unbroken in him. His ideals still fought powerfully for life; and they sustained him and brought fleeting, unnatural, unexpected, fickle moods of joy; like those brief blessed lulls in a fatal painful illness; and, in one of these moods, anxious unconsciously to bind and strengthen his resolves, he wrote feverishly to Mrs. Athorpe.

"MY DEAREST AUNT ALICE,

"Rejoice with me, for I am engaged to be married to a very pure, devout, and affectionate girl, who I know loves me deeply, although I am utterly unworthy of her—and it still seems so strange to me that she should love me, for men are not at all like women, who are so eternal and beautiful in the constancy of the love they give us.

"You will wish to know what she is like. She has grey-blue beautifully faithful clear eyes, rather a rosy face, and rich pale hair. She lives here with her step-mother and her sisters.

"I hope you are feeling better, my dear Auntie, and that your gout has quite gone. I hope you will leave town early this season and spend plenty of time at Cromer, for you know how much good it always does you. Please remember me to Canon Athorpe, and give my love to cousin Eleanor. I hope they are both quite well.

"Believe me ever, with best love,

"Your affectionate

"KIRKPATRICK."

He handed the letter to Marian, who read the important paragraph. A slight flush rose in her cheeks, and she stooped

and kissed his forehead. He drew her down spontaneously and kissed her—as he would have done with Mary—as a brother, but not as a true-lover; yet the temporary relief and happiness greatly soothed him.

A few days later he travelled to Liverpool to see Brough and discuss certain points about the work and other matters. Kirk had not seen Brough for two months, and he now congratulated him upon his new prospects as a director and a partner.

They spent a busy afternoon together, until, indeed, it was so late that Brough persuaded Kirk to stay with him for the night. So Kirk telegraphed to Bruside, and after dinner and wine the elder man took Kirk to a theatre.

Kirk this evening had recovered his balance, by companionship with Brough, by means of the wine, but mostly by relief from that fearful strain—the counterfeiting of love. For he was still but twenty-two, and full of much bodily and mental strength. Since coming to know Brough well, Kirk had truly fathomed that when Brough knelt down as if in prayer, on that night long since when they slept in the same room—he had done this solely because he thought it would prevent a sensitive shame on Kirk's part—should he wish to say his prayers. The delicacy of that action, only understood many months later, and all observation subsequent gradually revealed Brough to Kirk as a man of most innate goodness—but one who protected himself, or chose to mask himself, with an external hard material mentality. Brough in his ironical manner still called Kirk by his Christian name, and Kirk much liked this token of an affection or liking undeclared, and not needful to be demonstrated between them. Clinton was unaware of the complex attraction that he raised in Brough, who was peculiarly charmed by Kirk's strong sense of honour, Quixotic purity of mind and eye, chivalrous ideas regarding women, and further, by his young colleague's unspoiled

affectionate nature—and then all these so curiously conjoined with brains and great practical ability!

Kirk—in the happy days—could make Brough laugh heartily, but would never tell ribald stories, and Brough had long ceased to recount them in Kirk's presence—certainly not those crude inventions that he sometimes interchanged with other men.

Last Christmas, the Bendigo nephews—rather full of wine and just a little nettled by Brough's reference to Kirk at their expense—had sought to chaff and draw Brough, and they succeeded—in a way—

"Yes, yes, yes, flaccid, rancid, doocid, Charleous Charles, and ginger-headed, ginger-whiskered, ginger-hearted James—too pious, is he? And therefore odd company for me?" drawled Brough with irritable choler. "That is just exactly why I like him, he is the most interesting child or man I ever met. He's doocid pi, and yet most damned good at work, and makes it pay my sons, which you do not, O my whoreson beetleheaded flap-eared knaves! and he is witty, too, when he has, as we may say, the time, the place, the loved one all together. . . . Too much of the gentleman? is he? coarse ruffians! Of course he is, for you."

Brough drawled all this oddly, with a brutal calmness, adding the last words rudely and in matter-of-fact tones as he knocked out his pipe; and then finally rammed his meaning well home:—

"That is just the precise difference, between you two and we two."

The opera pleased Kirk and removed him from reality, placing him back firmly for the nonce in that heaven-world of ideal love. It was long since he had been to a theatre. But the music failed to move Brough—and twice Kirk found his friend's eyes fixed upon himself. As the curtain of the second act descended, Kirk turned to Brough and expressed a fervent admiration. The music had wrought on him, and he

was filled with a noble sense that he had, in face of all, behaved with honour; that he had done rightly and bravely, in adhering to Marian. He believed he had recovered his love—yet, the next moment, Brough's words—half curious semi-quizzing words—strangely chilled him—"Were I a silly girl, I think I'd fall in love with you! . . . Oft times, Kirkpatrick, thou lookest as though thou wert positively made for love, thy body and thy soul."

" . . . Do I?"

In Kirk's mind, very painful and poignant thoughts began to interweave with the words that Brough now uttered:—

"I'll tell you something now." . . . "Myself and the Old Man heard you were falling head over heels in love with some village girl—but later on, Aikrigg, my trusty spy, said it was only a flirtation, Kirk-patrick"—Brough dwelt on the name—"and even that, Kirk-patrick, surprised us; but we were glad, nay, overjoyed perhaps would be a riper word, to hear Kirkpatrick had let it drop—or rather, let drop the girl—there was 'nowt in it'—to use the expressive but so unclassical words of Mr. Aikrigg"—Brough smiled mischievously as he went on—"who seems to think he has a grave responsibility for placing Kirkpatrick in the local harem. You must avoid the delights of woman, but you *may* flirt. All young men—decent young men, Kirkpatrick—are like that." He regarded Kirk's set face.

" . . . You think me coarse? But even I once fell in love; right deep in love with a little dainty-seeming girl, offering her my heart, my hand, the choiring of my soul, and my ancestral debts. I was accepted and bethought me of the wedding, when I found the little darling had mothered two children by the local constable on nightly beat. . . ."

"I'm engaged to be married, Brough, to a pure girl."

"No . . . you don't mean that? The devil-in-hell! *What* a fool . . ." Brough abruptly turned his back on Kirk, crossed his knees violently and threw his arm over the back of the seat.

He meant what a fool he himself had been not to have obeyed the old man at once and personally looked after Kirk. But Kirk had flushed darkly. A new sense of masculinity filled him. He seemed suddenly to be years older. He touched Brough, and said—

“My private affairs are my own, and will not affect the work.”

“Well, well, well, well,” murmured Brough, without looking at him, or moving.

He was profoundly annoyed by a sense of utter disillusion, vexation, and unsettlement, and grieved by his own part in the matter. He stood up. He did not look at Kirk, but said,

“Do you want to see the rest of this grease-paint? Or shall we go and have a drink? I feel . . . that I want moral support of some kind. I shall not longer be able to lean upon Kirkpatrick. . . . I feel grieved, Clinton.”

He asked no further questions. Increase of salary would, thought he, assuredly be stopped if news of this foolish engagement came to old Mr. Bendigo. Aikrigg, he recollected, was supplying stone by rail to Whitdale.

“The news will come to old man Bendigo through beautiful bountiful Charlie,” was Brough’s next angry and sarcastic thought. But he himself would tell no one. He felt strongly that he had done very ill in the matter, and from his own judgment of Kirk it seemed that things might run a fatal, fatal course.

Late that night Kirk wrote his first love-letter, beginning “My dearest Marian”—

He told her—“On no account touch the floor-scrubbing, dear, for that is my prerogative—and I shall be back in time. Save yourself as much as you possibly can, and do not let the others force you to do what you know, now, I cannot bear to see you doing. I have bought some capital stuff for blacking grates, and shall paint them all with it, and then there will be no more of that back-aching black-leading! I have told Mr.

Brough that I am engaged, and I expect he will tell Mr. Bendigo; for though, of course, our private affairs have nothing whatever to do with my employers I want them to know; and this afternoon I asked Mr. Brough about a rise, and he said he would do his best for me with Mr. Bendigo, so I think it will be granted. I must save up now as much as I possibly can.

"You should receive this letter a few hours before I arrive. I expect to come by the eight-fifteen but do not on any account meet me as it will be dark, and the hill is so bad for you until you get strong again. However odd or quiet I may seem to you at times, dear—for we have strange moods in our family, and I know that I inherit these from my father—yet *ever* believe me, dearest Marian, your loving Kirk."

Next morning Brough and Kirk spent an early hour at the new Liverpool office. Brough then asked Kirk to inspect some heavy timber over at Birkenhead, and they arranged to meet later on at Lime Street Station. Brough would then go South and Kirk return to Bruside.

They lunched at the station and talked over further details of work; then Brough stood by Kirk's carriage door a few minutes, thinking. Suddenly he said "Oh!" and felt in his pockets.

"I'd forgotten something, you left this at the office, I opened it, Kirkpatrick, to find who owned it."

Kirk felt the tell-tale blood rising and burning in his face and ears. "He must have seen it, for some of it's written on the very title page," thought he.

Brough had observed and waited a moment, he changed his position, and, looking Kirk through and through with his truthful keen eyes, he said:—

"Are you happy, quite happy, Kirkpatrick?"

Kirk found it not possible to meet those eyes and tell a lie. He looked away, clenched his teeth, and replied firmly through them,

"I am quite happy, thank you very much, Brough."

As the train began to move, the elder man took his hand and said,

"Goodbye . . . And good luck. If you are ever in difficulty, or want my advice on your own affairs, come and see me."

"Goodbye," said Kirk, a mist in his eyes.

During this brief absence he had wonderfully rebuilt his precarious ideals, for he was one of those with great powers of generation, and re-generation. Knowledge was but for transmutation. Experience, for exaltation. Feelings and emotions were in him as potent, fixed, and strong, as the power pent in deep and dammed up water. To this source of his character Brough had penetrated. He had noted that Kirk always preferred "*I feel*" to "*I think*" . . . and on this night it recurred to Brough, and he murmured to himself, "and yet he can think, he can think, so widely and acutely!"

In the hall Kirk of his own desire kissed Marian. And then she, smiling, and her eyes still love-lit, held out to him a letter bearing the black crest of Mrs. Athorpe. They went into the front parlour, where they were alone.

Kirk opened and read the letter while Marian watched his changing face.

"MY DEAREST KIRKPATRICK,

"I received your letter but could not pass it as usual to Eleanor. I cannot rejoice with you, for it is very foolish, greatly foolish of you, to become engaged or think of marriage at your age, nor do I understand why the people of the young girl you mention should have allowed her to become engaged to you; for your salary must be very small. It is but five years since you left Severnly School, and you are not, I think, yet twenty-two. I am feeling very unwell and quite unable to reply to your news, which has given me a great shock. Your dear mother would deeply have disapproved such an early engagement, and you tell me nothing of the girl whom you say you love. I do indeed trust that she is a lady, and is your own equal. But I had understood you knew no nice people where you are? Marriages beneath one always lead to the extreme unhappiness of both parties.

"I have just re-read your short note. I do not understand what you mean when you say that 'she lives here with her stepmother and sisters.' You have mentioned no one to me in all your letters, Kirkpatrick; and I cannot tell you, Kirk, how much grieved I feel, that you have not confided in me. It seems such a breach of that candour in you that your mother loved. I cannot understand this engagement at all. I have not cared to tell my son and his wife. They will think you are mad, and they take so much interest in you. It is but the other day Eleanor said to my son, 'Kirk has only to marry well, and he will make a name, and will arrive.'

"You made a great impression upon them when you came here from Cirenhampton, for you were always a clever boy, and my darling Agnes, your mother, hoping so much for your future, once said to me: 'He is my child of many prayers.'

"I am growing very feeble, and I have few years to live, and I am no longer able to do as I like. Does your father, and does Mr. Bendigo know of your engagement? They will strongly disapprove. Nor can I approve of a girl who becomes engaged to a young fellow of only twenty-two, only just setting out on his career in life, and without proper means for her support—for you have yourself pointed out to me how many years must be spent by young engineers before they receive an adequate salary, and I think you have not yet passed all your exams? I am hoping that your news is only the result of some boy and girl freak, and that you will soon be tired of each other, and see your extreme mutual folly. I am too exhausted to say all I feel, and I am writing this with difficulty, in bed; for your mother, had she lived, poor dear, would herself have written this to you.

"Your loving Aunt Alice."

As Kirk put this letter back into its envelope, Marian, unable to control her anxiety, asked him—

"What does she say, Kirk?"

She put out her hand for the letter, but Kirk gently withdrew it.

". . . She thinks it unwise for us to be engaged, Marian; she does not see it as we do. I knew she would say these things."

"Let me see it, Kirk."

"No, I can't possibly show it you. It would only hurt you." He tore it in two in its envelope, dropped the frag-

ments in the fire, and watched them burn. Marian asked him tremulously,

"Does she . . . does she think I'm not good enough for you?"

"No, no, dear, she thinks we are too young, that's all, but she writes severely; don't ask me what she says."

By great effort he had forced himself to reply soothingly, but Mrs. Athorpe's words had stricken him with their truth. It was his first clear vision of the world's view of his position, and in his breast as he saw the girl's deep emotion he was overcome by fear—the same terrible fear of not being able to love her, of deceiving her, of breaking her heart.

Quite wordless and gone pale, Marian turned and hid her face on Kirk's shoulder.

He instantly put his arms round her, strongly and pityingly. His feelings were roused. Great pity had replaced love. "Never mind, Marian dear, never mind, dear. Don't fear anything. I don't want any relations or friendships. You'll always have me, dear, for yourself. I'll always take care of you. You know I love you, and will always love you." To the intellectual half of himself he said sternly, "I defy you to stop me loving her!"

"Oh, Kirk!" said she, raising a disfigured and tearstained face, "I felt something go through me when you were reading that letter."

"Never mind, dear," manfully said Kirk, holding her firmer, smiling, and as it were hurling himself into the breach with a grim humour—"You can feel something going *round* you now! *can't* you, dear?" and he held her close round her supple waist. The girl smiled through her tears.

Afterwards for some time he sat in a low chair while Marian knelt beside him with her head and arms on his knees. Well content was she to be resting on the body of the man she loved, and she was quite unconscious that he sat there rigidly, that he looked out from his fixed and strained eyes, and again fought with himself.

CHAPTER XLV

KIRK saw much more of Marian while she remained at home. He passed agitating days. By powerful mental and emotional effort he defied the effect of that selfishness he detected in her. Each day with relief he closed behind him the house door when he set off for the works. He had by power of strong will regained something of his idealism and love of Marian; yet the fear of a second loss haunted him like a terrible spectre, always present, too fearful to look on, yet just behind him, and he dared not to look behind. He threw himself into his work by main force, for though he felt too distraught to enter into worldly things, yet if he did not—then his fear and sorrow pressed round him and crushed him so that he could scarcely breathe. To the close observer he looked thinner, his eyes were shrunk and too bright, and his whole manner showed extreme mental and emotional tension. He started violently when a moorland sheep came suddenly out of a roadside lane. While returning each evening to the house, he spent the upward walk schooling his feelings, forcing upon himself a false calm and state of brightness; for on his arrival he must greet and kiss poor Marian. He retired to bed each night with intense relief, deeply thankful for solitude and that he found it easy to please her. He fell at times into the heavy sleep of exhaustion; but always his awakening was distressful. Generous pity and solicitude for Marian, his promise and his honour, kept him to the path he trod.

About three weeks after the day of engagement, he came in for breakfast and found on his plate a private letter from Mr. Bendigo. He opened it with misgiving and was glad that Marian had gone on some small errand. His foreboding

returned tenfold when he read the letter, for Kirk's sensitive nature was impressionable as that of many a young girl.

"Surrey.

"DEAR CLINTON,

"I have heard with considerable surprise that you are engaged to be married. I feel a certain amount of responsibility for young engineers under my employ. It is very easy for a young man to be led into an unfortunate entanglement, but I trust if what I mention is true, that you have at least consulted your father in the matter. I am assured that he would agree with me, that it would be most injudicious of a young fellow in your position to think of marrying. I write to you, also, as being privileged by my old acquaintance with your father. I will mention that he wrote me privately about you at the time I took you into my service. I will say further that you have served me satisfactorily and caused me to take a personal interest in your welfare.

"The question of your salary has recently been brought favourably to my notice by Mr. Brough, but, you will please understand clearly, that should the news of your engagement prove true, I would not feel justified either to your father or to yourself, in placing a premium on any foolish desires you may at present entertain, and which would prove inimical both to your career, and to your present work.

"I shall await your reply by return of post.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES BENDIGO."

He sat with the letter in his hand, feeling unable to eat the food placed before him by Mrs. Gisburn; twice, for appearance, he drank a little coffee, and then forced himself to begin eating—for he felt Mrs. Gisburn's eyes were upon him, and that she was anxious, and he felt suspicion that she divined his state of mind.

Truly she had to some extent discovered him, and also the contents of the letter. It was the first from his employer which had come bearing the word "private"—and it was not addressed in the usual formal type-writing. Over an hour since she had turned it over and perceived in it something unusual; she thought it must contain orders to send

him to those other works—but as she watched his face she saw the letter contained graver matter, and her slow imagination led her to a dim but truthful perception. The cause of the shock, too imperfectly concealed by Kirk, was guessed by her.

She sat down and began to sew, then she put her hands in her lap and said slowly,

“Mr. Clinton, ye mussn’t let them dead feelings come to ye.—Ye must either be a man, or a mouse, now.”

Kirk held his breath a moment—then spoke to her calmly.

“Whatever I feel, you need have no fear—of what I think, Mrs. Gisburn. What I *do*, will be all right.”

He took the morning paper, propped it up as though to read, looked at it steadily, and ate a little food.

But he dare not wait for Marian, for he was so overcharged that he felt he must immediately be by himself.

It was the Queen’s birthday and Mr. Bendigo always had the day observed on all his works. Kirk had forgotten this fact and now he was thankful for it. He passed the single watchman at the gates and went on to the deserted private office, which he unlocked and entered. Of habit he opened a window and sat down. To his strange emotional trouble from which he had so vainly sought desperate escape—but found himself at every turn fatally barred in by his honour and by the unbearable agony of hurting Marian—to this was now added a bitter sense of hurt—it was clear that all his hard work was to go unrewarded. He had been unaware how keenly he had built up hopes on the increase of salary. It was bitter to know that he had fallen in the esteem of his superiors, and he saw money difficulties ahead, and that he must seek a fresh appointment—very likely without a testimonial from Mr. Bendigo. He remembered the innumerable efforts and disappointment after disappointment before he had escaped from home. At this moment his sick condition of mind recoiled despairingly from these prospective

efforts; a grievous deathly nausea against the human life now for the first time in his own life overcame him. No longer could he endure his conditions. He would take flight. He had fought and fought bravely and now he had lost. He would flee to some far country, where no one knew him and no one would ever again hear of him.

He stood up and went feverishly to the safe, to take out the little hoard he had begun to save up for the wedding—the wedding that he now saw had never been destined to take place. By the small bag of money lay his loaded revolver.

“It is better for you, poor girl, oh far better; I am not what you imagine, I am only a wretched man who has no heart, who is one of those horrible fickle ones whom you will hate. You will soon forget my treacherous face.”

Through the open window suddenly began to pour in the rapturous song of an ascending lark, trilling and trilling, like its own glad little heart, in the joyous May sunshine; but it pierced Kirk’s heart like an exceedingly sharp knife. He made an inarticulate noise. Instead of the money his hand clenched the revolver, he lifted it quickly, cocked it at the full, dropped into a chair, put the cold muzzle to his full temple and pressed his finger on the trigger—harder—harder—as hard as he could—

Then with anger and shock he brought the weapon before his eyes. He stood up and pointed it through the window and pulled hard, but no explosion followed. He then saw the unobtrusive safety-lever had been drawn over, unnoticed. He drew it back and at this moment the lark’s song, heard of him but subconsciously—ceased as suddenly as it commenced. It caused a relief to the great pressure of his grief. He sat down again and put the muzzle to his temple, but he did not pull the trigger. He dropped the weapon in his lap, thinking, “I am a damned coward as well as a cad,” and instead of the desire of death came a fearful weakness—to tell Marian everything, to ask her to forgive him, to tell him what he was to do.

He went back up the hill and found Marian down on her knees scrubbing the oilcloth floors. Upstairs Mrs. Gisburn made a great noise with the furniture. The moment he saw Marian he knew his ideas were impossible. He stepped over her feet, protesting, his hand on the roundness of her bodice.

"Oh, Marian, dear! You know so well you mustn't do this! You know what Dr. Rennie said. And you promised me you wouldn't."

He took her wet hands and raised her to her feet. He was filled with a sense of himself re-conquered. Here in this life he could and *would* tenderly help her. He was of no slightest value himself, but she was precious, and her heart was loyal and loving. His own was too worthless to be further considered. He kissed her and she smiled radiantly as she exclaimed:

"Oh, Kirk! I'm all wet! I didn't want you to catch me! and mother can't bear seeing you do it, she goes on ever so when you're not here. Do let me do it, Kirk," said she, trying to draw away—"I feel ever so well to-day."

"No, I shan't. You must obey me now, and not your mother. It hurts me awfully to see you down on your knees, and your poor back so weak."

He untied her apron and threw it on the sofa.

She obeyed him and locked the front and back doors. When he saw her sitting down and peeling potatoes—the apron re-adjusted—he was satisfied, and fell to vigorously on his knees while Marian watched critically through the kitchen door. After a few minutes she came and stood over him. He looked up at her and she stooped and took his hand and kissed the little curls of hair she loved, and then repeated the kiss on one of his small ears.

"Eh, I've never heard of one like you, Kirk! you do housework better than a woman! you are a dear, Kirk."

Kirk laughed nervously, she could not see his eyes.

"You go back to your work, Miss, or we shall have the old lady making a fuss."

Kirk—while he scrubbed—remembered his mother taking him to see a young widow lady and her two boys of about his own age or a little older. Afterwards his mother had said to him,

“They are very poor indeed, Kirk, so poor that they cannot afford even one servant, and those two dear boys, of their own accord, do all the heavier housework, to save their mother. That is true chivalry, Kirk.”

In the sunny afternoon Marian proposed they should go for a walk, so Kirk threw a cloak over his arm and they walked slowly up the main road of Bruside.

Marian had put her arm in his and was deeply enjoying herself, very much aware of what Kirk did not see—the numerous folk peeping at them through the sickly geraniums and window flowers.

They turned off and went down hill by a quiet path that led them among the small green pasture-fields; here they were well hidden by the high stone walls, and by a scattered little wood or shaw. Daisies were fully out, golden dandelion petals sparkled in the new grass; under the trees of the little shaw showed a few wild hyacinths. The lovers selected a retired spot where Kirk spread the cloak. Marian knelt in a sitting position, and Kirk sat beside her. She took one of Kirk’s hands in both her own, and held it in her lap.

She looked pretty; her illness had thinned her, and she seemed quite slender in her dark close-fitting dress. A square yoke of thin white material showed on the bosom; this was very becoming and gave Marian a look of youth and maidenliness.

“Tell me about when you were a boy, Kirk,” said she, looking away over the hollow of the valley, to the great spread of brown sunlit moorland that rose up beyond them.

So, sitting touching each other, he began to tell her of his strange ecstasies in the woods, and how a wild flower had caused him tears one day, at Cirenhampton; then he told her a little of the day at Junipen, and he described that dear

southern land to her. He told her of the sorrowful strange feelings he had, when he had heard the youthful girls' silvery laughter floating far up to him from the lawn of the old farm-manor, two years ago, and as he told her this he suddenly for the first time connected that prophetic feeling with his present-day. "It *was* a premonition," thought he, and fell silent, and the horrible weakness to make confession, to tell Marian, to unburden himself, even to be himself comforted, to put his own head on her bosom, began a second time to overcome him. The struggle was so great that he trembled and shivered.

Marian glanced at him and was alarmed.

"Oh, Kirk! You're ill?"

His face was working, and he was looking down, clenching the grass with his free hand.

"Oh, Kirk! oh, Kirk, dear . . . why are you so dreadfully sad?"

He could not reply.

Then with a piteous voice and look averted she whispered to herself,

"Ah . . . don't you want to marry me, Kirk? Kirk, you must never marry me, if you don't love me."

She loosed his hand, turned away, and began to sob, covering her face and drooping her head, kneeling in a crouching attitude.

Then was he utterly revolted by what he thought his cowardice.

"Don't, dear! oh, don't, dearest! don't cry, I can't bear it, Marian, *don't* cry. Oh, you are so mistaken—" he was kneeling and had hastily drawn her to him, and clasped her very tenderly.

"There, dear . . . there . . . there, dear . . ."

Oh, how sweet and humble she was in this distress, and he was overwhelmed with desire to comfort her. She leaned passively against him and drank in his passionate words.

"Don't cry, dear, don't ever be troubled again. I don't

know what made me so sad. . . I'm subject to these strange moods. I told you that I was. I told you of the flower at Cirenhampton . . . that it made me cry . . . to explain to you . . . I cannot help myself—my strange moods—but be assured, ever, dear, that I love you, that I am yours only, and never doubt me again; I shall never love any one else but you." "This," thought he, "is indeed true."

She gradually ceased crying, and after a few minutes spoke to him tremulously.

"I—I didn't know, Kirk, dear, why I said that. Something came over me, so sad, so dreadful, and then your voice, and when I saw your eyes——"

Kirk soothed her and gently pressed her head against his shoulder.

Marian began wiping her wet cheeks, then she smiled—"Kirk, I think you and me are both a bit queer sometimes—we're not like others—like other folks—but we've got each other, dear, always—but sometimes I feel something so dark come round me, as if I had nothing left, and then I feel such a dreadful sadness I could kill meself—it frightens me . . . but I've got you, dear, now . . . I'll never think like that again."

She leaned back on him and looked up in his eyes so that willingly he bent his head and kissed her anew.

They walked back arm-in-arm through the village, and Kirk helped Marian to prepare tea. Afterwards he proposed secretly to her to take train to Hephthwaite and there buy the engagement ring. Marian smiled and flushed, and went upstairs quickly to put on her coat and hat.

As they descended to the valley she quickened her steps and danced a little on his arm, exclaiming,

"Oh, Kirk! I feel so well! don't let's go by train! let's walk there! it's ever so nice along the river; we can sit down if I get tired."

Several people on the main road met them and smiled

meaningly. Marian smiled back proudly; she had taken Kirk's arm immediately they left the house.

The path they followed was of black cinders, and went beside the river, through the single breadth of flat meadow that formed the narrow valley-floor. Here the river was bordered by ragged hawthorns in full new leaf, still unsullied by the smoke. Above the reach of covetous hands were a few sprays of delicious blossoms; and the newly broken twigs below them showed how appreciated were these rarities. Between these bushes on the river-side was seen the pink sunset, reflected from the pools of still water among the rocks and boulders of the broad channel.

Kirk knew the water was polluted; but the slight evening wind blew away the smell from the lovers. The greasy boulders were mostly hidden by huge green leaves of wild rhubarb; the tall and curious pink flowers of this plant rose in spires above the sky-reflecting water. The mills were silent, the dark green hills were coloured by the sunset, and in the unusual stillness sounded faintly the traffic on the setted roads, the distant shouts of children, and from some farm high upon the moors one could hear the far-away barking of a sheep-dog.

There were other lovers arm-in-arm on this path and Marian was acquainted with nearly every one of them. Kirk did not observe the young men, but he noticed that Marian and the girls exchanged warm glances. It was that secret eternal triumph of women over men—and of which women are always aware. One or two pairs stopped and wished them happiness, displaying a shyness in the presence of Marian's well-dressed and austere young stranger.

"Why, if that isn't Edward Garside coming!" said Marian, a little fluttered.

Kirk was aware that this now wealthy brickmaker had once been refused by Marian.

Garside was a man of about thirty-five, and was ill-dressed in new clothes, but he bore himself like a master. He knew

Kirk a little, for he had supplied certain special bricks for the works.

He approached them down the middle of the path and they mutually stopped as they met. Mr. Garside looked at Marian and smiled frankly and a little sadly. He made no greeting, but said in a sincere, quiet, and deliberate manner,

"Well, Mesther Clinton. Ar always said thee was a straight 'un; and tha's gotten a good lass; and o' good parents—for ther wur m'feyther's friends. Ov known Marian sen her wur a little gurl . . . I wish thee both joy and mooch happiness!" He shook Kirk's hands and then Marian's. He put his hand to his cap in reply to Kirk's salute, and went on deliberately.

All these congratulations were a strengthening and confirming of Kirk in his set purpose.

At the jeweller's unpretentious shop Marian took much time to select a ring. Kirk chose her one containing a single clear, starlike diamond. This ring looked good and the design was chaste. But Marian preferred one more ornate, a thin ring, with five little diamonds held very lightly in open setting.

"Besides, Kirk," whispered she to him—"it's ten shillings less than the other, and it fits me, and the other seems just a bit too small."

"All right, dear, I want you to choose what you like best, inside our small limit."

"It's you must put it on, Kirk," said she.

Kirk and the young jeweller smiled and Kirk slid the chosen ring on her short finger.

On the way to the station Marian with some little difficulty drew on her suede glove and Kirk observed this.

"It does stick up well, Kirk, doesn't it? I think it's just lovely! just what I've always wanted!"

In the train she fingered the little ridge made on her glove by the hidden ring. They both laughed, Kirk chaffingly, but

he delighted in giving presents and was so glad Marian was well pleased.

She took his hand and looked so happy and relieved that he experienced a joy he thought was love returned to him, but which really came from the satisfaction of his conscience and peculiar sense of honour, and, in a lesser degree, from that innate pleasure that all young men share in the first possession and protection of a young and physically attractive woman.

Just before they neared the house-door Marian stopped in the darkness to pull off her resisting glove.

"Kirk! Let's see how soon they notice it!"

Dinah saw it first.

"Eee! She's got her engagement ring!"

But dismay fell on Marian for she saw a diamond was gone! Dinah and Marian—north-country and superstitious,—instantly thought this a bad omen, but did not say so. Much depressed, Marian hastily followed Jim, and Kirk, who carried a lantern, and they all three searched about the spot in the road where she had pulled off her glove, but after repeated search they found nothing. As they re-entered the house they met Ruth coming out—

"It's all right! Marian! I've found it in the glove!"

". . . I won't have it now—I'll get it changed—Oh, Kirk, I *do* wish I'd had the one you chose me! It's ever so unlucky."

But Kirk laughed at them all and re-assured Marian.

"I'm quite glad really—a good thing it has come out at once, so we can easily change the ring. I thought it looked too fragile; and the diamonds are not nearly so sparkling as the single good one. We'll go over again to-morrow evening, dear."

CHAPTER XLVI

MR. WILKINSON thought very ill of Clinton's engagement but he did not speak of it. Kirk soon mentioned that Mr. Bendigo had refused him an increase of salary, and that he intended to leave the old man's service so soon as he could secure a better-paid appointment. He asked Wilkinson to tell him of any berth that came to his knowledge. It flashed through the older man's mind that if Kirk left Bruside he would soon see his folly, and would take advantage of the separation to break off the engagement; but he also thought it would be very unwise, and unfortunate, for him to leave hastily employers who thought so well of him. It seemed a bad business for Kirk to leave a big firm in which Wilkinson judged Kirk had good prospects.

But meanwhile Mr. Bendigo took his own action, and Kirk early in June received a letter telling him that Charlie Bendigo would shortly arrive at Bruside. He would take charge of the works, but under Kirk's supervision. After instructing Charlie, Kirk was to go and live at Chunaldale in Hillshire, where a contract for new waterworks had been secured. He was to return every fortnight for two days or so, to see that Bruside progressed satisfactorily. If anything urgent arose at Bruside, then the nephew would telegraph for Kirk. The old man finished his long letter with these words: "I think you should be quite able to make these arrangements work well."

Chunaldale is the most southern outlier of the cotton towns, and is forty miles south-west from Bruside. The town, a rather large one, is built in the tumbled trough where several deep valleys join together, on the most northern edge

of Hillshire, and where the highest region of the Pennine Range adjoins the manufacturing purlieus of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Chunaldale contains some large but out-of-date spinning-mills and a few chemical dye-works, and is a rather old, squalid, decayed-looking town. Gritstone yellow and black gives the colour of the walls, and the roofs are of thin grey and dirty-yellow slabs of stone. But within a mile of all this the bracken-covered solitudes and the high valleys rise up to wild and beauteous moors, that undulate two thousand feet above the level of the sea.

In early days before steam came in the abundant water power at Chunaldale attracted spinners, and there are still, to-day, many little ruined, mossy, ivy-grown mills, sequestered here and there in those steep tree-filled ravines that radiate southwards and upwards from the big Chunal Dale. Cut on those deserted little mills one can find among the ivy dates that go back to 1790.

Kirk took rooms let by a gaunt old maid, who had seen better times. Very many years before, she had been governess to a wealthy family and had been well treated. But the children growing up had gone to school, and then Miss Grayley had secured less and less remunerative posts. She had passed through painful years of poverty and discomfort, and at length had become almost destitute. In this great strait she had at last written to one of those children, now grown up. She asked for a very small loan. The exception had taken place, and old Miss Grayley had been put in receipt of a small annuity. She returned to her birth-place, where a friend or two still remained to her, and there she took a small house. This she gradually and sparsely furnished. For some years before Kirk's arrival she had increased her income by letting rooms to a young schoolmaster, who boarded with her. He had just left; and in reply to her advertisement Kirk vacated the local hotel and took rooms with her. He could live very cheaply in this way, and he and the old maid ate a midday meal together. Her refined

speech and manners gave pleasure to Kirk; and after the first weeks of reserve she told him a good deal of her life. But he told her nothing direct of his own, and she never questioned him.

Although somewhat embittered Miss Grayley preserved a kind heart that oddly belied her severe face, her gaunt upright carriage, and her occasional sarcastic remarks on men, things, and women.

She served Kirk's breakfast and tea in the front sitting-room, thinking he would prefer this.

Kirk now saved every shilling that he could, his object being early marriage, for he felt sure that Marian could not much longer withstand mill-life, and to save her from that would make up—though but a little—for despicable inconstancy.

He was allowed second-class fares on railways, but he now travelled third-class and saved the difference.

The separation from Marian was a great relief, but had quite an opposite outcome from that hoped for and expected by Mr. Bendigo, Mr. Brough, and Mr. Wilkinson. Constant juxtaposition would have been far more dangerous for Marian's hopes, for even she would at last have discovered him; or, the unrelieved pressure would have grown to more than he could bear. Every three days he wrote to Marian affectionate letters that he found very much easier work than actual daily contact with the beloved, to whom he so feared to be unfaithful. He signed himself "your loving Kirk."

Yet this was a nightmare-like period. His spectres of remorse and fear seldom ceased to dog him. The state of great nervous strain continued. Whole days of agitation came often and often, and he suffered continually the longing to make to her a clean breast,—and then, would think he, she could take him if she desired. But he knew that she would not—he knew it would break her heart,—the same as he felt his own already broken—and so he must fight himself down.

There was nothing else; and he continued successfully to fight down every natural wish.

He began at length to suffer from real neurasthenia. His sleep became meagre, very broken, and that terrible feeling as though a vice held the pit of the stomach seized him for days. His daily work became a second ceaseless effort of the will. He began without reason to fear all things; he prefeared ordinary business interviews with quarry-owners, timber merchants, estate agents, with the engineers who had designed the scheme he worked on, with the cousin of the noble local landowner—all interviews that passed off perfectly well, and in which there was not the least reason for any fear; they were interviews in which he was most successful.

But after business hours, then it was that darkest depression and desolation most frequently overcame him, and he was driven out and up into the hills to sit by himself, anxious, unnerved, hopelessly depressed and desolate. There—in the fading light—with no sounds breaking the silence but those of falling water, the weird monotonous nightjar, the sad bleating of sheep, the calling of the distant moorcock gathering together for the night—there in these lonely places he would wrestle terribly with his intense grief, with his enormous desire to flee away from what appeared duty irrevocable. He longed unspeakably to go abroad somewhere, without a word to a soul, and be free, and forget all these terrible emotions, and be content to know he was a cad and a blackguard, inconstant, fickle, selfish, unable to love—unworthy of all noble love. But yet, by flight, he would escape this acute stress of insincerity and this great burden that he so feared he could not much longer uphold. In these solitary places during the increasing beauty of summer, he mourned terribly and alone over the loss of all happiness, loveliness, and love.

Between these paroxysms he would as it were build again at his fallen ideal of Marian, and try to believe he loved her; and always he had an affection for her, a sincere and deep

desire to help her from her painful environment and comfort her.

The Bruside works were now visited fortnightly by Kirk, and he arranged his visits to include the weekend.

Marian was again working at the mill and this gave Kirk some anxiety, but Marian seemed altogether stronger, brighter, and, what was very grateful to Kirk—gentler and more unselfish at home.

The summer passed into a very cold and wet autumn; by mid-October the high hills round Chunaldale had received their first covering of snow, but in the deep valley it fell as cold rain or wet sleet. The rocky rivers grew full and one roared past the little house in which Kirk lived. He could always hear it in the night while he lay awake.

His professional work had become so pressing and continuous that he could seldom rest on Sundays. Urgent work always arose to be done while the mills were stopped, while the railway traffic was light, or it might be some figures or returns were needed quickly by headquarters.

Kirk should have been preparing for his final examinations in civil engineering, but he had no strength of mind left for the effort. His ambitions had become very fitful, so that now, when at times he felt less troubled, and when the day's work was over, he had a form of greatly needed recreation and oblivion, in taking up again his geological thesis on Cirenhampton, . . . marshalling his facts, drawing his sections, and himself preparing numbers of small drawings for the text. Such things no longer deeply interested him, but the labour on them prevented other thought. To save fuel as the winter drew on and because it seemed heartless to let Miss Grayley sit alone hour by hour in her sitting room, he often took his work into her parlour, where he covered the large table with his papers and books of reference, while the old maid sat and knitted, after late tea. Occasionally they

would speak to one another. At times, paralysed by sadness, he would sit and do nothing, his brow on his hand, unable to concentrate his thoughts.

In addition to the true thirst for knowledge originally possessed by Kirk, and which as it were still carried him on by its momentum, there was now a second motive, and a third and sad motive, in this geological research. It had seemed to open a way into a new means of livelihood. He had received much kindness and recognition from eminent geologists since his first discoveries when he was still a youth; and old Dr. Cholderton twice had spoken to him of the Geological Survey. If he could but join that body he would for ever leave civil engineering, to work at things he liked and for which he knew he had talent. . . . Then, too, the salaries to him seemed very good. Besides . . . geological survey-work would mean long periods of absence from Marian.

Before November he found himself—though not by his own initiative—again in weekly correspondence with Professor Rally, who read the proofs, improved the English and the style, criticised, helped, and found for him many valuable references.

Miss Grayley quietly studied Kirk and all that he did. He told her nothing of Marian, and very little of himself. But she had gleaned some information by putting twos and twos together. She viewed with disappointment the letters that Kirk received weekly, addressed in a hand-writing so strikingly uncouth—"neither male nor female," said she to herself. But Miss Grayley decided that a girl wrote them, that she was "sloppy and clumsy," and was no person to whom Mr. Clinton should be writing. The postmark was Bruside where he went once a fortnight, and she formed a shrewd idea of the truth. As she grew to like Kirk and to look forward to his coming home, she approached nearer and nearer to a time when she would speak to him of his own affairs when some timely chance arose, for often she

heard him sigh again and again, and she saw that some great sorrow weighed upon him.

Early in December Kirk had in hand a trench over thirty feet deep, in the bottom of which was to be laid part of the main cast-iron pipe-line of the waterworks. To enter and reach the service reservoir, this main was being laid through a hill, on which were built the outskirts of the town: and through this hill, and between the rather close-built houses, passed the deep trench.

Miss Grayley asked Kirk why it was needful to lay these great pipes so very deep, and he endeavoured to explain to her that it was unfortunately essential, in order to avoid "rising above the hydraulic mean gradient; otherwise, Miss Grayley,"—said he—"the water would refuse to flow through them to the service reservoir and thus to the town."

When the trench had been sunk two-thirds of its depth, under the supervision of a not too competent ganger—he was an Irishman—it became time for Kirk to visit Bruside.

On the day before he went Kirk gave this man full and careful instruction, and by next afternoon he arrived at Bruside. Here he met the chief assistant of the engineer who had designed those works, and for five days they sat together in a draughty wooden office, which had replaced the old cottages. The Bruside works were by now nearly complete and many points of cost remained to be settled. Charlie, very miserable, and living at a public-house three miles away, occasionally looked in at the office, and stood and warmed himself at the smoky stove.

Charlie took a light-hearted view of Kirk's engagement. It amused him oddly now it had occurred, and he felt certain it would not last. At the same time he felt genuinely sorry, for he knew it affected Kirk's pay. But Clinton seemed so different from the Clinton of Cirenhampton and had become so taciturn, reserved, and so much older and more commanding, that Charlie ventured no word on the subject.

CHAPTER XLVII

KIRK returned to Chunaldale with an ordinary bad cold, of which so far he had taken little notice, beyond the annoyance it caused him. On arriving he went at once to his rooms. Miss Grayley told him that a man had come several times that morning to see him, and again after lunch, and had seemed very anxious indeed for his return. She described his appearance. Kirk at once went out of doors and walked rapidly towards the big trench. Even as he approached he could see things were seriously wrong. He found his orders had been disobeyed, a different system of timbering had been used. Water and running-sand under great pressure—as surmised by Kirk—had been met with. This sloppy material was now escaping through the joints and base of the loose and bad timbering. One whole side of the trench—with the timbering, and the mass of earth and roadway supported by the timber for nearly four hundred feet of length—had already sunk a little. The heavy cross-struts of the timbering were out of level, others were fractured, or on the point of fracture. Fine cracks were visible in the road, between the houses and the trench. Immediate drastic remedy was essential or there would be a disaster—the destruction and collapse first of the road, and then of the row of houses. The incompetent foreman was by now unnerved, and useless. The time was three o'clock and the day bitterly cold and windy. Heavy cold December rain fell at intervals. Kirk noticed the man had not even had sense to stop surface-water running down the fine newly opened cracks in the roadway. Kirk had this work commenced forthwith. He then sent a note to his best ganger, Bob Foster,

a tried and trusty man,—he bade him come without the least delay. He told him to leave standing the work he was doing. Kirk awaited this man, who was to bring with him all his gang and also send for any other men who could be collected. The matter was highly urgent.

Kirk then sent another hasty note to the superintendent of police. He asked for a half dozen constables, to turn all traffic into another road, warn the people in the houses, and, if need be, enforce exit from the threatened homes. He sent to his central stores for heavy timber.

He next started timber men to work, double-strutting at the worst places, but there was a shortage of timber, and he waited anxiously for supplies of "long-stuff" and "die-square" to be brought from the central stores. How thankful he was that he had always kept a stock untouched and ready for emergencies.

The rest of the men on the spot, about fifty in number, and all tired by a heavy morning's labour and the struggle in the deep and wet trench-bottom, he set to work moving, carting, and wheeling away the banks of earth that remained near the deep excavation, so as to lessen the weight on the timber. Kirk also ordered men to throw back into the trench some of the excavated sand and earth. He sent for hay and stable-dung, and for trowels, with which the stuff would be rammed into the timber joints and thus prevent the slow but continuous escape of sand and silt, now taking place nearly thirty feet down. For this same reason he also slowed the speed of pumps and allowed the water to rise half a dozen feet. But when the new ganger came with eighty or ninety men, it was already nearly dark.

Kirk now called to the man responsible for this mess.

"I've done with you. Leave the work, quick.—Wages to-morrow at nine."

The burly man looked at Kirk with a black anger, but said nothing, and then walked away, his face disturbed.

"Now, Foster, this trench must be 'soldiered' throughout. —Thank goodness! here comes the first lot of stuff to do it with! Light up those Lucigens! Quicken the pumps a shade!"

They glanced along the dark trench, already lit dimly by many small lights.

"You're right, Sir; 'soldiers' should stop it, Sir, an' nothin' else will."

"Now shout-up the men or they won't stick it in this beastly rain, and the trench is simply damnable—double wages for every one who stops and does his bit."

Foster shouted with stentorian voice—"Now, all you cock-bucks! . . . Double-shift for every man as works!"

An immediate increase of vigour took place; the men began to work with renewed will.

Kirk remained till eight o'clock, and then went home. He was soaked through, and colder than any one; for the men by physical exertions kept themselves warm, and Bob Foster was provided by the firm with thick oilskins and a good sou'wester.

Kirk had changed his clothes and half finished a meal, when a loud knock resounded through the house.

With a sense of disaster Kirk himself hastened to the door. Outside in the pouring sleety rain stood Foster, shame-faced, and behind him was a mob of sulky dripping navvies and timbermen.

"They've come out of it," said Foster.

"What!! . . . Do you call *yourselves* men?"

Kirk rushed back into the house and forcibly thrust on his saturated coat.

"Come on! Follow me! Every man of you!" He pushed through them roughly, fiercely. Every man followed him, through the pouring rain.

Half the length of trench was now safe, but the other half had moved nearer to destruction. Even as Kirk looked down, a big strut cracked, crushed up, and fell: but he

judged the timber would stand at least another hour, before the collapse came. He looked round at the lamplit faces, and clenched his jaws. The policemen were there. The inspector behind him attentively awaited orders. Then Kirk took a lantern from Bob, and they went inside one of the narrow gardens that fronted the row of houses. They stooped to look closely, and, as Kirk had feared, they found the garden wall had begun to lean, very slightly, outwards. The rain running down the wall entered a crack one-eighth of an inch wide, just where the earth had joined the wall. They hastily examined twelve gardens. The crack was continuous. The long fissure in the road had all been carefully stamped full of clay, unfortunately it showed no change: plainly the whole—road and gardens together—was now preparing to move in mass.

The crowd of men had gathered round three blazing fires that were close together. Kirk went up on to a heap of earth by these fires, and the soaked men stood silent and attentive all round him.

"How many of you are here?" said he hoarsely.

A timekeeper replied—"About one hundred, Sir."

"Have they grubbed since dinner?"

"No, Sir."

"Oh, my God!"

Kirk took Bob's pocketbook and wrote a note on the sodden and wet leaf in the glare of the nearest roaring Lucigen light. He tore it out and gave it to Foster, and said in a loud and tranquil voice so the men should hear well—

"Bob, my son! send this order to the nearest pub, four men and three barrows, and bring back three kegs of the best beer, and plenty of bread and cheese. A pint all round as soon as it comes, and a pint every hour. Put old Jack in charge, and serve it out quick,—a bit of grub with each pint—bring plenty of cans, and then go back for more beer."

A general slow but encouraging movement had taken place among the men when the magic word "beer" sounded in their

ears. Besides, they were very hungry: that was their real trouble. Kirk forthwith struck again in this psychological pause.

"Men! Stand by the firm. Most of you are old hands. Mr. Bendigo's a good master to us. You know me. There'll be no one hurt to-night!"

"Bob! Down into the bottom! with me!" said he aside, taking Bob by the arm—"or they'll funk it!"

"Come on, my sons!"

He began to climb down, lowering himself from bay to bay with bare hands, through the muddy, strained, and dangerously distorted timbering, lightly and quickly trying each piece with his foot before he trusted his weight upon it. Bob climbed down closely after him, and carried a lantern. Before they were halfway down, Kirk glanced up and saw a dozen good timbermen were following.

The continual sinister cracking, wheezing, creaking, and slight groaning of the timber-walls was now much more audible to Kirk and told him of the great pressure on these timber walls. While above, the wind, the Lucigens and the pumps had stopped one hearing these ominous sounds. He noticed the thick horizontal "whalings" were desperately bulged. The struts holding them apart were being slowly forced into them, timber forced into timber. He felt alarmed, frightened, now he was down. The timber would very likely bridge them if it came in, and then they would drown as the water rose—for the pump suction would be choked or smashed. A moment of indecision seized him—whether he ought to risk the men's lives? and Bob's,—who had so many children.—Whether he ought not to get every one out of the trench and the houses without delay? But men above him were lowering two great "soldiers"—that is, vertical timbers equal in length to the depth of the trench. They would stand upright and opposite, in pairs, and then be strutted apart with short massive timbers. Kirk and Bob at once helped with their own hands, guiding the descending

bulks. The indecision passed and Kirk's clothes were soon smothered with mud. Danger, Marian, everything but the work, was forgotten. A second crowd of men, above, and in the trench, were lowering another pair about nine feet away.

Kirk shouted at them.

"No! No! Every twelve feet! till we have her done all through the worst, and then again, between 'em!" He coughed a great deal after shouting.

"Get up on top now, Bob, and break them up into six proper gangs! they're wasting themselves and tumbling over each other! I'll stay here."

The first new pair of soldiers were in place, nearly strutted, and had taken up some of the local destructive pressure.

"Look out! . . . damn! !"

A heavy short piece of oak loosened by the new timber-work suddenly had fallen, and struck other timbers in its violent descent. The red-headed man it slightly hit swore tremendously, while he rubbed his shoulder. He moved it and found himself all right, but the pain was severe—he rubbed himself again and swore profusely. But Kirk laughed and spoke.

"By Jove, Ginger! you ought to be an M.P.!"—and all the men laughed, for anything went down well in such conditions.

The work progressed excellently. Beer was again served all round with bread and cheese, eaten hastily by all but the police, who drank and munched slower. The men—limited by their short vocabulary—used and re-used all the most obscene and favourite expletives; they joked most grossly, and worked most ardently, despite the miseries of ice-cold mud and water, saturated boots and clothes—and the very real danger.

By one o'clock in the morning the trench past the houses was safe, and there remained only a short length to be made secure. Beer and a good mouthful of food had been served out three times. Kirk clambered up again. He had made his

way backwards and forwards several times by now, throughout the whole length below. He now went along the road towards the remaining forty feet of deep cutting. Bob a third time asked him to go home, for Kirk was of course quite wet through; the rain had gradually turned to sleet and he felt very cold and coughed incessantly, but he felt also an enormous satisfaction with the night's work, and was in high spirits, and Marian had remained quite forgotten.

"I seem to have a frightful cold, Bob! but the bally old trench is saved!"

"You go 'ome, Master, now, and get 'arf a solid glass of whisky down your neck, Sir, there ain't no cause for you to stop here not another minute."

"Well, let's just look at the last bays."

They approached the spot. Kirk suddenly sniffed, and put his head low down.

"That's gas! ! Hold this lantern!—no—get right away! Put-it-out!"

Kirk went behind the spoil-heaps and met a powerful rush of gas, and at the same moment he heard the low, strange and sinister whispering of an earth-mass in preliminary movement. He rushed to the trench—"Up for your lives! she's going!"

Panting men were furiously scrambling up. They had heard and taken the alarm before Kirk shouted.

"Get from the side! Off with the lights!"

Then followed a loud roar of rending crashing timber, and two deep muffled blows that shook ground beneath the excited men.

"Are you all out? Are you all out? Are you all out?" cried Kirk anxiously.

"Every mother's son!" replied a hoarse deep voice.

They dare not go near the huge cavity for the night was pitch dark, and gas could be heard escaping in volumes from the broken main. Bob had sent two men running to the gas works. The strong wind fortunately blew the vapour

from the houses and the lamp-lit trench. Kirk then stationed police so that no night-farer could walk into the huge pit and all the men save about twenty were dismissed—after finishing the beer, of course.

Kirk, Bob, and the remaining men collected at a safe distance, round the fires, and awaited the people from the gasworks.

These men had promptly shut off the gas on their way to the subsidence, and when they arrived Kirk was able to examine the collapse. A big piece of road was swallowed, but no further damage would ensue.

“Well! Jim, we *have* been lucky!”

“That’s so, Sir. We’ll stop and trim this a bit, but you go ’ome this gordforsaken minute or you’ll catch your death of cold—and do what my missus never ’as much trouble to make me do—get half a glass of solid-whisky-neat down your neck, Sir, afore you turns in, and get a good muck-sweat on you, Sir.”

“All right, Bob,” hoarsely said Kirk, smiling, and he added, “I’ll do it to please you!”

He walked home feeling strangely light-headed. He had forgotten Marian. He was intensely self-satisfied. “Judicious beer and good leading overcometh all things!” had said Brough. Nothing beat real things; authors and artists and most people knew nothing of the pleasure of real things, of good fights with heavy dangerous things and men.

He remembered when he got home that there was no whisky that he knew of in the house. He never drank it except occasionally with Brough, or when with some one he met. His bed-room had no fireplace, and felt dank and cold. He saw his breath as he coughed. He felt extremely cold now. He spread two jackets on the bed and got in, but coughed so much that several times he left his bed to drink a little water. At length he fell asleep and dreamed frightful nightmares, in which he was caught and suffocated in the trench.

CHAPTER XLVIII

WHEN morning came he felt very ill. His chest seemed as though blown up tightly with air, and he breathed fast and short. Alternate heat and shivering passed over his skin, and every cough hurt him deep down in the back. Snow was now beating and whispering on the window-panes, and his room was icy cold.

At eleven o'clock the doctor sent for by Miss Grayley sat on the bedside, his finger tips on Kirk's rapid pulse—while he gravely watched the sparkling eyes and flushed face of the patient. Kirk smiled, and with some difficulty exactly described his own sensations. He sat up and the doctor listened to him back and front. The change of position made Kirk feel very sick.

"Are you married?"

"No."

"You'll be a lot worse before you're better."

"Why?—Am I so ill?"

"Pneumonia, my young friend. Shall we send for any one?"

". . . No . . . thank you, doctor."

"I think your family should know. . . . You must have a nurse at once. Perhaps you, Miss Grayley, will help in the daytime?"

"Yes, indeed I will, one professional nurse is quite enough."

"You're going to be very ill, I am afraid, Mr. Clinton. Is there no one who should be told?"

"I shall not die," said Kirk resolutely.—"You needn't

worry. But I like your bluntness. My kind doesn't die young," said he.

The doctor laughed, and declared to Miss Grayley—"That's the sort of patient for me!"

"I must write a letter, at once, and see my foreman," interrupted Kirk.

"You will do nothing of the sort! You must not have even your hands out of bed! not if you want to be pulled through this. This room won't do, Miss Grayley."

He walked out into the larger bedroom where he saw the fireplace.

"Get him in here at once while he can walk. But first air the blankets. Put in a fire, and it must be kept in night and day—*it must never go down*. One minute, Miss Grayley——"

By himself he re-entered Kirk's room.

"Now you've got to be absolutely obedient, and think of nothing but getting well. I'll send you a first-class nurse, a lady whom I can trust; but her fee will be three guineas a week. I suppose you can afford that?"

Kirk received this shock in silence. He saw his little store of money was going to be used up.

"If you are not very skilfully nursed you will die. It will pay you to have a good nurse."

Kirk gave consent. He had thought, "If I die, then Marian will die miserably."

Kirk promised he would obey orders. He promised the doctor he would do no writing; he undertook to keep his hands covered.

The doctor wrote a telegram and gave it to Miss Grayley.

Marian would wonder why he had not written, and Kirk thought anxiously how to explain why he could not himself write. How foolish he had been to promise faithfully that he would keep his hands beneath the clothes. Impatiently he

awaited the nurse. He would ask her to write for him. He felt that he could not disclose himself to Miss Grayley.

He began to feel very ill. He had never before felt his heart beat at so ridiculous a rate!

About five o'clock his small acute ears heard the snow-deadened sound of a carriage; the noise of doors in the house quickly followed. Kirk feverishly imagined the conversation in progress between the nurse and Miss Grayley.

Miss Fortescue possessed a quiet, well-bred and very soothing manner. She was rather plump, but graceful and suave in movement. The nurse and patient on seeing each other mutually smiled.

"Good evening, Nurse . . . I'm a nice crock, I am."

Miss Grayley left them together. Miss Fortescue pressed the burning dry hand and put it back under the clothes. She felt the two pillows for a moment, then put her smooth skilful hand softly under the back of his neck and reversed them, bringing the soft one uppermost and squeezing it in a very practised neat way to a comfortable roundness.

"Thank you . . . I say . . . that's much better."

"Miss Fortescue, would you mind writing a letter for me? I'm such a fool. I told the doctor I wouldn't. There's ink and paper, in the next room."

"Of course I will," said she moving gently about the room—"I've written many, many letters for patients—always doing it.—Shall we do it now?"

"Please; thank you, so much." She returned and sat down half-facing him.

"It must be very short, for you ought not really to talk more than you can possibly help—speak quite low."

Kirk thought painfully, and began to dictate.

"'My dearest Marian, I have a . . . sprained wrist.'"

Miss Fortescue looked at him deprecatingly, and he smiled at her.

". . . But why should you wish to say that, Mr. Clinton?

Any one who cares for you would far rather know the truth." She waited till he finished his severe coughing.

"Do you . . . do you . . . think she would? would it not trouble her a great deal?"

"She would far rather know you are ill than be deceived by you."

"Are you sure? I'm so afraid of her being frightened."

"I am quite positively sure it is best to tell her."

"Well . . . 'My dearest Marian, I have had, the bad luck, to get a slight, dose, . . . of pneumonia, and like a fool, I promised the doctor, I would do nothing'—Please, Nurse, put the commas in, not many, a long way apart, it will sound . . . easy then. 'You must not, worry a bit, dear, comma, and of course, if I were to become, seriously ill, I would ask you, to come and see me; but it would be, quite a waste of money, to do so now, comma, and I am very comfortable here, and have a very, nice nurse,'"—Kirk and his nurse smiled—"indeed," added he, "full stop," and they smiled again at each other.

"It has been necessary, to have a trained nurse, because I am forbidden, to get up, and poor old Miss Grayley, is too old, to attend to a young, fellow like me. There is no, danger, at all, I shall soon be on my legs, again, comma, I will send a note, every three days, as usual.'"

"I think that you have done quite enough now, Mr. Clinton," said the nurse rising from her chair—"You see it's made your cough very much worse." She gave him some barley water.

He moved his head negatively—"A bit more—" She took the pen up again.

"I had some, bother, with a bad trench, and got, a bit wet, comma, but as you know, I am really, a very tough, and healthy chap, comma, so don't worry, dearest, but obey me. Your affectionate and loving, Kirk. K, i, r, k.'"

Miss Fortescue addressed the envelope to his dictation and went into the next room. There she wrote a hasty note—

"Dear Miss Gisburn, I must tell you that Mr. Clinton is seriously ill, although at present there is no great danger. He will be what I consider a good patient, and I feel sure he will pull through. You can rely upon me to nurse him with every possible care—I have had much experience, I am forty years old—and I will see that nothing is left undone for him that should be done, so do not be unduly anxious. The doctor will certainly not allow either you or any one to see him for at least a week or so, while the disease runs its usual course. When you write do so calmly as he must on no account be worried about your feelings, about his work, or about anything. I will send you a line myself each day, and if he were to become dangerously ill—which I don't much expect—I will telegraph for you. Believe me, dear Miss Gisburn, yours very sincerely, Helena Fortescue."

The next morning Kirk's temperature had risen to a hundred and three—and each cough hurt so acutely that he held himself tightly with both hands. He had increasing difficulty to prevent crying out as each spasm began. During the afternoon the doctor made his second visit that day. He sat on the bed and looked down at Kirk, who lay in a curious position face downwards, with his head over the side of the bed.

The nurse enquired about this with a single look, and the doctor replied aloud—

"Let him lie as he likes if he feels easier that way; but we must get him up now."

An extraordinary weakness overcame Kirk, and he allowed himself to be assisted to a sitting position while the doctor sounded his back, uncovering a little at a time. They laid him down again.

Putting his hands beneath the clothes the doctor felt Kirk's body and limbs.

"Built like a long-distance runner! ain't he nurse? He's very wiry and hard, but he's not fat enough."

"I am, I got placed, in the mile, and the half, mile."

"You shut up talking, my young man, and strictly obey my she-dragon. You've got to save every bit of wind for *this* sprint, I can tell you!"

"I will." Kirk grinned cheerfully at the nurse, but his face already was altering.

Early that night he became delirious, with a very high temperature. He complained incoherently that rings of bright light were round him, brighter and brighter, too dazzling to look at, especially the vivid spot in the centre. He threw his head from side to side, to escape the glare. Then he imagined his thumbs were growing enormous!—each as big as his body! while he himself shrunk to a minute being.—By three o'clock in the morning he was quite unconscious, but highly delirious, and in unnatural strength repeatedly sat up in bed and jumped about convulsively. At four o'clock Miss Fortescue knocked until Miss Grayley came.

"He's very delirious—I was so sorry to disturb you—but he throws the clothes off the moment I leave him, and I've not had time to make the cotton jacket—there it is, just take my needle and finish off lining the vest with the cotton wool, quick as you can, then we'll get it on and he won't run such a risk of chill."

Quite frightened by Kirk's torrent of words and violent movements, Miss Grayley asked if the doctor should not be sent for.

"Not yet, but we'll have him here early if this lasts."

When they were slipping the wool-lined armless vest round Kirk, he seized Miss Grayley's arm with a vice-like grip, and spoke hoarsely, rapidly and most excitedly.

"It's coming in, I tell you, Bob! . . . can't we get up? . . . come here, dear! there! to me! in my arms, why *I'd* never hurt you! put your dear head down, in my arms . . . it *shan't* kill you, by God! Marian . . . stand over here, Bob! . . . I'll never let you know . . . will I hell! No! I *can't* love you! . . . if you will laugh so horribly . . . what shall I do . . . what shall I do? . . . I've broken her heart . . .

she doesn't know . . . I can't do it . . . Mother . . . why don't I love her?" . . . He struggled with Miss Grayley. "It's coming! I tell you it's coming!!! . . ."—He gave a terrible jump in the bed, stared fixedly, then fell back, and lay still a little like one asleep. . . . Miss Grayley was trembling all over, and her arm hurt from the force with which Kirk had clutched it. The nurse calmed her—

"They are often like this, Miss Grayley. He's quite a normal case . . . Of course, you know as well as I do that what patients say in delirium is either sacred, or rubbish, and must not be repeated?"—She was carefully covering up Kirk.

"Oh yes, yes, poor fellow, I know he's in trouble about some girl—I guessed it—she writes to him—"

"Will you put a little coal on for me? Use those old garden-gloves I brought, make no noise, it might break the torpor. I had not expected he would be delirious quite so soon."

Kirk was unconscious for three days and came to himself in the afternoon, while the doctor stood over him. The patient began to cough and suffocate.

The nurse rapidly lifted him. The doctor held him and vigorously fanned him with the nurse's chart-book.

"Open the window!"—cried he. Miss Grayley did so quickly.

But Kirk slipped down, struggling convulsively for breath. The doctor grabbed him by his brown curly hair and lifted him right up into a sitting posture, and Kirk got painful breath.

"By Jove, young man, you mustn't do that!"

Kirk panted weakly and coughed, he was too weak to hold himself, and too weak to prevent a faint groan at the fearful pain in his back. After a little, the paroxysm ceased, and he was laid down again on the high pillows, and then he continued his anxious first thoughts before he was delirious

—He must not die because of Marian, and he would *not* die; and he clenched his teeth . . .

“Now shut it!” said the doctor to Miss Grayley. He went out with Miss Fortescue and stood still, looking at her.

“Nurse, he’s a very bad case. I’m afraid he’s going.”

“If the delirium or coma returns . . . but his will is very strong . . . now he’s conscious.”

Some days later Kirk lay in bed, more helpless physically than a baby, too weak even to lift his fore-arms, but convalescent. He was raised up frequently for agonised coughing, and was fanned. He felt desperately emptied of life—but the disease was leaving him. During two days excessive perspiration trickled from him. Strength slowly returned day by day.

One afternoon, as the winter evening came on, he gazed at his nurse until he met her dark eyes.

“Nurse . . . you dear woman . . .” whispered Kirk.

“Well?” said she, coming to him and laying her smooth hand upon his forehead.

“Your hand’s like mother’s . . .” He took it feebly and kissed it. A strange tear ran down past the sharpened angle of his jaw.

“Will you write for me? and ask Miss Butterworth to come?”

“Would you like to see her so soon? Can you bear it?”

“Yes . . . I must see her, now.”

Two days later Marian arrived. All morning Kirk had been conjuring up an affectionate meeting, but now that he heard her steps ascend the stair a sudden fear overcame him, and he had no strength left to combat his nervous expectancy.

Outside the door Miss Fortescue met Marian. A sharp sense of tragedy went through her when she saw the girl was not one for Kirk and was much older. The unguarded glance and hostile feeling were felt by Marian.

“You must not let him talk much. He is very, very weak, indeed, Miss Butterworth. Please sit facing him—I have

put a chair for you—and then he will not have to move his head. You must be quite calm and ordinary. I'll come back in a few minutes: you will not agitate him . . . ?”

“No,” said Marian, but not listening to the words. For she felt a strong jealousy of this charming woman, and a grief and resentment at her own sense of inferiority and isolation.

Miss Fortescue opened the door, saying brightly to Kirk, “Mr. Clinton, your visitor is here!”

Marian entered and the door closed behind her.

She stood transfixed by the great change and deathly appearance made in Kirk's face. Then, uttering a cry of anguish she fell on her knees by the bed and threw her arms round him, and pressed her head on his breast.

This shook the bed and upset him very much, for he was immediately very afraid of beginning to cough.

Then she kissed him and let her head rest again on his chest. The pressure was more than he could bear in his extreme weakness. She laughed nervously to herself in her great joy of contact with her lover. With shut eyes she felt for his hand.

“Marian, dear . . . it's too, heavy, dear, my chest—”

She stood up over-hastily, again shaking the bed. She spoke in that thick voice she could not help when overcome by great emotion.

“Oh, dear, have I hurt you? I didn't mean, I'd forgot you were so dreadfully ill. Oo, Kirk . . . if you'd died . . . It would have killed me. . . . Oo, Kirk darling, y'r mustn't die. You don't know what I've gone through.”

She stood still, her hands clasped tightly against her heart, while fearfully and introspectively she thought of the first shock of the bad news, and of all that followed.

“I think, I do, dear,” feebly said Kirk, overcoming himself—“Give me, your hand. Don't shake me, dear, it makes me, cough, I'm all right, now, . . . but I'm so, cut up about the money, it will cost.”

"Ay, Kirk, dear, never mind that!"—said she, stooping over him, while her hand stroked his wet hair—"I could wait for ever for you—"

". . . I'm not worthy, of you . . . or any girl, you are so faithful, dear, . . . I want to get you, away, from that horrible, mill . . ."

"Ay, you mustn't worry, dear!" cried she with a lightened heart, jumping up and re-shaking the bed—and Kirk knew he was going to cough and he tried to sit up and hold himself—"Call Nurse!"—said he faintly, his face distorted. Marian opened the door—and hearing the cough beginning Miss Fortescue came swiftly in and held Kirk up.

To Marian it was agony to see Kirk suffer like this, and she went perfectly white. When he had been laid down again the nurse bade her say good-bye. She kissed Kirk and he turned his clammy face and kissed her. He smiled anxiously, with clenched jaws, and pressed her hand.

In the evening the patient's temperature rose very high, and he suffered a partial relapse. The doctor made his own inquiries of Miss Fortescue; and they determined to admit no one else to see him.

But in a few days Kirk began steadily to improve. Unexpectedly, a calmness and stoical resignation entered him on the day after Marian's departure.

After all these months of acute unrest and severe mental struggle, it was a blessed feeling to know he had achieved resignation and complete self-conquest, to perceive that the period in his life of intense desire for personal happiness, that burning love-passion, full of selfishness, grief, impossibilities and madness—had burnt itself out. Never had he felt so extraordinarily calm, so stably fixed in purpose, so irrevocably confident—that now, at last, he would go on along his life-road, looking neither to left nor to right, fully aware that his plain duty, the sole honourable course, was to lead Marian by the hand, "Until death us do part." "Until death us do part." His duty beyond that remote point would cease.

But Marian Butterworth was in no such state of mind. The further she receded from Miss Fortescue, the more arose in herself an uncontrollable jealousy—an intuitive fear of hostile influence, a fear that quite unnerved her; so much so, that, on reaching home she sat down at once and wrote hastily to Kirk, making what she thought a clever allusion to this woman, who had treated her so cavalierly, usurpingly or, in Marian's thoughts, "off-handedly," "jealously," "cruelly." Bitter tears filled her eyes as she recalled that first unguarded glance of surprise and disapproval. A pulse of hot anger dried her tears as she felt again the miserable inferiority which had overcome her in that woman's presence.

"She doesn't know my darling Kirk. He's worth fifty of her sort! and it's me he loves!"

She put her woman's last word in a long postscript—

"Miss Fortescue seems very fond of you, Kirk, and I'm sure she's nursed you well, she'd hardly let us have a word together—though you'd never see that yourself, dear—I suppose she'll leave you as soon as your cough gets better. Miss Grayley says she gets three pounds a week."

Marian read this over and felt a good impulse to cross it all out, or tear up the letter. After a long pause she put aside her jealousy and her humiliation. She went to the fire and carefully burnt the letter. A new and beautiful feeling had entered her; she felt uplifted and braver. She sat thinking of Kirk, and there were fresh tears in her eyes, but they were tears of tenderness. Humbly she determined she would try hard to improve herself and become worthy of him. She had been foolish and wicked to doubt his faithfulness.

In this spirit she wrote another letter, taking pains with her writing, and she concluded with these words:—"Miss Fortescue must stay with you until you are quite better, Kirk dear, for she is a splendid nurse I could see, and though it takes a lot of money, I don't mind that one littlest bit, because you're getting better all right. I have prayed for you every day. God bless you, dear. Ever your loving Marian."

CHAPTER XLIX

THE convalescent went to Cornwall, where, during six expensive weeks, he continued the reduction of his savings.

The calmness of his mind remained. Marian's jealousy made him feel sad, it but gave evidence of his new reflections—that all human beings were terribly separate—that all those ardent, touching hopes of true union, of great love, between men and women, were mostly useless, and none would ever be fulfilled. One or the other, the man or the woman, always failed; Marian had failed to some extent. He himself had failed grievously, therefore he must bear the greater burden. Affection, evidently, was a very difficult form of duty—and had to be performed like most duties—dead against our selfish personal inclination.

At Looe Kirk slowly recuperated, and at this distance from the north, in the warm sweet winter of Cornwall, not altogether would his youthfulness be denied, and he began to feel some mild enjoyment in his life. The people staying in the hotel found him an interesting personality. Whist he played with mathematical precision. He was well dressed, well-read, quite *au-fait* by nature, went walks with mothers and fathers, listened well, appeared to be sincerely interested, spontaneously re-arranged old ladies' cushions—the unscientific angle of the uncomfortable, said he, obliged him to alter it. Then, too, he spoke never of himself, but evaded all leading questions with quiet, skilful, and gently satirical replies. To the girls and younger women he was an enigma they discussed. It soon became plain he courteously avoided them; yet when this was not possible, his manner, if oddly tender and fatherly, was yet invariably pleasing, rather sur-

prising, very attractive to them. He was not aware that he hungered so deeply for companionship of refined women; he was not aware that such would have meant infinitely more to him, and to his future life, than to an average man. One day when walking with a certain Major Arkwright and his wife, he was startled to be laughed over curiously. Looking at her young companion, Mrs. Arkwright remarked—

“No one could call you a ladies’ man, and yet, you know, Mr. Clinton, you have a most compromising manner with them!” and she and her husband laughed.

“. . . But surely I have no such manner? Ah—I see!” said Kirk, contracting sensitively,—“You mean I am the opposite?”

“No! oh no, young fellow! don’t you dissimulate! you have a way and a taking manner with the girls and you know it!”

“I do not—I assure you . . . I’m sorry—I thought I avoided them.” A painful flush rose in his thin cheeks.

“Oh, what an ungallant!”

“That’s only his superior blasé manner— isn’t it, wife?”

“No . . . indeed, it is only . . . I reverence women, but it seems such an utter waste. If a man were going to marry her, then he should do all these things. I feel sure, I know, that women would not really like me . . . if they knew me really. They like men who are *naturally* unselfish, men uncritical, and who are great in some way, fine physically, strong in some good way, or very clever—I’m none of these”—Kirk began to smile—“I remember one girl who said the man she would marry must have a deep voice, and she was right. I notice such men are always strong and stable in affection. Women must have affection given them, but men can do very well by themselves—it’s their *duty* to do so.”

“My dear fellow! of all the very rummest ideas! but there! we all go through these phases while we’re young! What is he, dear? Twenty-two? The lofty grave conceit of it! At twenty-two! Laying down the law re women. I’m forty-five,

and you make take it from me, young Sir, No MAN ever really comprehends a woman! That's just the delight of them! Their unexpectedness! Now as a matter of actual fact most of what you said is just the other way about. Why! I've seen the prettiest, wealthiest, sweetest girl in the station throw herself, absolutely chuck herself! at the most wretched specimen of a sub!"—While he looked at Kirk, he put his hand on his wife's arm—"Just think of Ella Ross, my dear, and her *worm* of a husband! A fine girl like Ella! And he'd no money either. . . ."

"All the same!"—began Mrs. Arkwright—secretly delighted of the opportunity—"there's a great deal in what Mr. Clinton says—not of himself"—she bowed and smiled at him—"though I'm not going to flatter him—but on the day I first met you, dear, I knew something that you had done."

"Dear lady! silence. Nothing has ever been so detestable a nuisance. I grant you the argument off-hand—no more!"

These pleasant days passed away, and Kirk said good-bye to all these friendly people, as one might say good-bye when leaving civilisation, to return to exile in some Polar waste.

He received orders to go to Bruside, put all in final order, settle all outstanding accounts, and see the new engines start their work.

After leaving Crewe snow began to appear thinly on the ground. At Stockport heaps of dirty snow lined the further parts of the platform. The Bruside valley Kirk well knew would be deep in snow. About seven in the evening he arrived, greatly feeling the cold. Marian met him. She had come down in a cab. Together they drove up with the windows closed, and the glass grew heavily bedewed by moisture, condensed from their breath.

Oh how terribly poor Marian's accent and manner jarred him after these two months of absence!

In the house that evening they left the doors open again and again, of habit, and the draughts and chilliness, added

to his mental distaste and trouble, made his uncontrollably irritable.

After once more asking for a door to be closed—left open this time by Marian in her pre-occupation—Kirk went and put on his great coat.

"If you really want me to live, you must help me to keep warm. I can feel the shape of my wretched lungs inside, and if I get cold again I shall have a relapse. I feel cold to my bones."

"Oh, Kirk, dear," said Marian, "I'm so sorry, do you think you've come back too soon? It's so cold here."

CHAPTER L

WHEN Kirk lay ill at Chunaldale Mr. Bendigo had written very kindly telling him to feel no anxiety and take no thought of his work. His salary would continue, and until the doctor thought fit he must not return to duty. Brough thoughtfully had visited Kirk to see that he was well cared for, and to confirm Mr. Bendigo's orders.

But Kirk now judged that three months of inaction, coupled with the bad effect of his engagement, must assuredly prevent for a long time any increase of salary. Should he remain with Mr. Bendigo, at least a year must pass before he could expect better pay. Thus a year would pass before he could keep himself and Marian.

Early in March Wilkinson told Kirk of an appointment: an assistant engineer was required by a civil engineer at Holmroyd. This place, one of the large woollen towns of Yorkshire, was distant from Bruside only some ten miles north across the moors, but by rail it was thirty miles.

Wilkinson showed Kirk the letter written to him by Gifford, the engineer in question. Gifford asked Wilkinson if he knew of a likely man suitable for the berth. He would prefer a young assistant possessing some practical experience in waterworks. Salary to commence with would be at the rate of say two guineas per week. For a good candidate, the post would be a permanency, for Gifford had years of work booked ahead. He hoped Wilkinson was doing well, and was in good health.

"It's not much to start with," said Wilkinson, "but he'd soon raise you, say in six months, if you do as well as you've done for Bendigo.

"He treats his men well. I was with him for three years, myself, on the Swale Valley works. He's a coming man. I believe you would do well with him. But don't let me persuade you, Mr. Clinton. You must decide for yourself.

"But if I write to him about you I think the berth's yours. You, of course, must refer him to Mr. Bendigo, as well. He'll want that—sure to want to know all about you."

"Oh! that's rather awkward," said Kirk. "I forgot to tell you—Brough wrote me this morning that Mr. Bendigo is very ill. He was taken ill quite suddenly last week, a slight stroke, rather serious Brough seems to think it."

"Indeed? Well! I'm very sorry indeed to hear that! very sorry! . . . What would be your position, Mr. Clinton, if he died? What if the nephews wanted the brass, the capital? Brough's only a fifth share, he told me. The two nephews might break the firm up. There are no public shareholders, I think."

"No. I understand it to be a simple partnership, between the old man, his nephews and Brough; and the nephews, as you know, don't get on over well with Brough. . . ."

"Ah . . . well; think it over; make your mind up, and I'll see you this afternoon. I must write by return, you see, or you might miss it, that is, if you want it."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Wilkinson, it's most kind of you."

"Nay! There's no thanks needed. I'd not be sure I'd done the best by you, Mr. Clinton, if you did take this billet. You must make your own decision. Who is it I'll quote?—'It's a dark business to meddle with another's fate'—or something like that."

Kirk determined to make the move. From what Brough had told him he thought Mr. Bendigo would, of purpose, withhold a better salary, and he judged that he had fallen very considerably in the old man's esteem. Then, also, if he were aiming to become a fully qualified civil engineer, he

had by now spent quite enough time with a contractor, and should try to join the staff of some well-known civil engineer—a member of the Institute. Gifford was just such a man. With Gifford Kirk might certainly expect more leisure. The hours would be from nine to five. He would have time, and would in fact even be encouraged, to prepare for and pass the “Associate” examination.

Then, too, he had no wish to live in the South until Marian was educated. He had full faith that Marian under his own loving tuition would earnestly work, read, study, and correct her manners and pronunciation, once she left Brumside and lived with himself. Patiently and gently he would teach her.

Sooner than expected, Clinton was sent for by Mr. Gifford. Mr. Gifford—a large, well-built ruddy man of forty-five—smiled frankly, laid a pen down, and spoke very quickly, with a good accent.

“Well, Clinton, you want to join me?”

“Yes,” said Kirk, also smiling. “If you will but make it worth while.”

Gifford laughed cheerfully, and sought on the table for a paper. “Oh! I see! I said a hundred and four per annum. . . .

“Well, Clinton, you’re very young, and I have six other young men up and down the country. But I want you here. I must treat all fairly . . . let-me-see! . . . I must ask you a question or two. What-the-devil-am-I-to-ask-you?”

While he spoke he had eyed Kirk’s pale face and thin form.

“Ah! Now suppose I put you in charge of a rather bad contractor? and he dumped a lot of dirty sand on the concrete bunkers and began to mix it in, what-would-you-do?”

“First curse a moment, I suppose. Then order absolute stoppage, send for contractor’s man in charge, and for Clerk of Works. Turn two cement bags inside out, bang them, fill them in their presence with two samples. Order the stuff and the concrete to be removed forthwith right off the works.

Either myself or C.-of-W. would stand there to see it done. If they were not brisk, or refused, I would threaten stoppage of the whole works, and penalty as per specifications. Then, of course, I would write contractor, ordering removal of ganger, and stating further that any repetition would mean dismissal of his agent for the work. I would send you a copy, with report, and one sample."

"You didn't meet the other candidate?" said Gifford, laughing. "Did you, Clinton?"

"No, Sir," said Kirk, laughing in sympathy with Mr. Gifford's twinkling eyes.

"He said he would come and report to me at once what they were up to!—a nice boy, but evidently quite without experience."

A whistle blew and Gifford grabbed a speaking tube and listened—

"WHAT! . . . WAIT-A-MINUTE!" and with eyes twinkling—his hand over the tube—he turned to Kirk—

"Clinton! that contractor!—that-very-rascal-is-here!—damn him!" Then Gifford bawled through the tube:—

"Wants-to-see-me-does-he-indeed? . . . OH! IT'S YOURSELF, MR. WRIGLEY, IS IT? . . . WELL! TAKE-A-SEAT!—AND-ANYTHING-ELSE-YOU-CAN-LAY-YOUR-HANDS-ON! !"

Kirk laughed heartily, and Gifford smiling keenly said, "How's your health, Clinton?"

"Oh! . . . been ill? What? Last winter at Chunaldale? Beastly place. There's only one county in the country fit to work in, and that's Yorkshire!"

"You are not north-country, are you, sir?"

"I am. Went to Cambridge. Got my degree. Nearly killed me, the heat, mugginess, flatness. I learnt little enough engineering, in fact nothing!"

"But English?"

"Quite right! quite right!" laughed Gifford—"They polish

us. But about salary. If you satisfy me, you shall have more in nine months—that's-not-long?"

"Very well. Thank you, Sir."

"By-the-bye, you better keep this—well worth keeping——" Gifford sought among the many papers ranged in front of him. "There—read it!" He grasped the tube and shouted—"Send Wrigley in!"

Kirk took the letter, and, in the familiar handwriting, but gone noticeably shaky, he read as follows:—

"London, May 5th, 19—.

"DEAR SIR,

"Mr. K. Clinton has been in my service as a resident engineer in charge of important public works since April —, 19—. He is a young engineer who possesses well above the average in skill, ingenuity, and tact. His methods are sound, and have repeatedly been justified by the event. He is reliable, a hard worker, and thoroughly trustworthy. In the present state of my health I give him this testimonial as a duty that I owe to him for his faithful services, which I should be sorry to lose.

"JAMES BENDIGO,

"for James Bendigo, Ltd.

"R. Gifford, Esq., M.A., M.Inst.C.E.,

"Bank Chambers,

"Holmroyd."

The respectful, warm and grateful feeling that he had formerly held towards Mr. Bendigo strongly rushed over him. He turned mechanically to the door, opened for Wrigley.

"Good-bye, Clinton!" cried Gifford, and grasped his hand. "Then you'll be here-in-a-month?"

"Yes."

Regret, at parting from Mr. Bendigo and Brough, tempered his success. He had not imagined Mr. Bendigo so generous, so unselfish, as to write Gifford such a letter. Nevertheless, Kirk left the heavy portico and came into the smoky sunshine with a lighter heart than he had known for months. He sent a telegram to Marian, telling her of his success.

He could, he believed, save eighteen shillings a week out of two guineas, and in six months perhaps they could marry. At the present moment he had only ten pounds in the world. He had just paid the doctor's bill, received from Chunal a few days ago.

On arriving at Bruside he received a letter from Mr. Bendigo, in which he was informed very briefly that from the first of the next month his salary would rate at £110 per annum. But this offer had arrived too late. Kirk showed Marian the letter and she advised him to remain with Mr. Bendigo, for then—thought she—he would not go away from her. But Kirk pointed out the precarious state of the old man's health, and, what was more important, his own position as a civil engineer.

"Besides, Marian, it is settled, as I gave Gifford my word. I like him, and my mind is made up."

In April Kirk commenced his new duties. He found Holmroyd was a town, hideous, squalid, sordid. The streets were tortuous, narrow, hilly, noisy, and were paved throughout with rough stone setts. On dry days when the wind blew, the air filled with clouds of noxious dust, which was full of dry soot, grit, and pulverised horse-dung. The frequent damp weather caused a black and sooty mud to coat all underfoot, often many times in a week; and when dry the pavements were disgusting, for half the people seemed afflicted with catarrh, with bronchial trouble, or consumption. Kirk realised it was a bad place for health, especially for one still recovering from pneumonia. Everywhere among the monotonous and grimy houses stood mills, factories, bleach-works, iron-works, dye-works, fell-mongeries and the like. A large river made its walled and confined way through the centre of these congeries of black buildings. Highly polluted, the river exhaled by night and day a warm and sickly smell, offensive as the steam from a sour and greasy dish-cloth. The death rate was very high. There were no clean open suburbs; the houses and mills thinned out gradually among miles of desolated

fields, black-walled and studded with deserted buildings, brickworks, small collieries, and those horrible little villages built round old-fashioned mills—around old works that still made coarse cloth or bad blankets and used the local water-power. On the first Sunday Kirk walked out into the hilly sodden pastures, all blackened by smoke, and found they were manured with human excrement. He longed for the purer air and the elevation of Bruside. Southward where the smoke allowed, he could see the moorlands; and he knew that those low bleak hills and plateaus effectively divided this eczema of trade from Marian's birthplace.

Kirk spent the next few days at Bruside. That little town seemed sweet now, and he quite looked forward to his future visits.

But he found these weekly trips cost more money than could be spared. He would only visit Bruside on his old terms of board, and to this was added the rent of his rooms at Holmroyd. The loss, with fares, was too considerable. To save the railway fare he walked several times over the moors—ten miles, beginning with a steep four-mile hill. But he found it too exhausting in his weak state of health, and he promised Marian he would not repeat this long walk until he had regained his strength. His lack of complete recovery was very patent to every one who knew him.

After a visit in May, he wrote to Marian telling her they must be content to see each other once every three weeks, so vital was it to save money.

In the Gisburn-Butterworth household things were not going smoothly. Bruside folk hinted that Marian would not see much more of Mr. Clinton. They said he came less frequently because he was cooling-off. Dinah was the recipient of this rumour and she brought it home. Marian, who listened, set her face and replied:

"You don't know nothing about him, Dinah, and never dare come again telling me your nasty stories. . . . !"

But she was troubled. Her health, only in part recovered, once more showed symptoms of decline, and the hot weather had again arrived. She had asked her mother for something from her wages—to save towards marriage—but this Dinah fiercely resented, and between the sisters enmity increased.

Kirk on his next visit to Bruside was alarmed to find Marian at home, unable to work. She had met him at the station, and had leaned more and more upon his arm as they slowly walked towards the house up the interminable hill. So exhausted was Marian, by weakness, and by present pain which increased, that Kirk made her sit down and rest on the low places where the upper part of the stone walls had fallen away. Tenderness and pity filled him as he noticed her face, and that she walked with a painful stoop. The pain in her back, and the short cough that came on with exertion, gave him much apprehension. She was visibly thinner, and in her weakness she appealed most strongly to his manliness. But mingled with his apprehension for her was a glow of feeling that made him happy, and astonished. He ejaculated to himself, "Good God!—as though I could ever possibly have deserted her!" He held her arm warmly against himself, and spoke tenderly to her. On reaching home, her real weakness and illness were so obvious as to awake the concern and sympathy of her family. Ruth, although she loathed the life, volunteered to go to mill for two weeks.

Marian felt sure she would be better in a fortnight. It was the ceaseless standing and stooping and the heat that had made her poorly, said she, but now she would be able to sit nearly all day. And then, too, Jim was very kind. He offered to get up before the others and make early breakfast, and thus give Marian a long rest each morning; for by established and accepted custom whoever stayed at home must rise first.

Near the end of the fortnight Jim, by previous request of Kirk, sent a note. He stated that his sister was neither worse nor better. Kirk obtained leave of absence for the Saturday, and went to Bruside on Friday evening. Next morning he took Marian by train to Leeds, there to see a gynecologist of repute.

When the elderly nurse returned with Marian to the waiting room, Kirk asked her,

"May I have a word with the doctor?"

"Certainly. Follow me."

Kirk spoke to the small sharp man:

"My name's Clinton. I'm engaged to Miss Butterworth. She works for her living. She is over-worked, it seems to me. But what really is the matter with her, doctor?"

"Well, she's very anæmic, Mr. Clinton, although she looks moderately well . . . her heart is not at all right,—no disease, yet, I think, but it might come on. . . . She should have absolute rest and change for quite six months. She's not at all fit to be married, Mr. Clinton, in my opinion, just yet. A bracing seaside place would do her a world of good. The pain in her back is due indirectly to standing, it is caused by something else. It is rather serious. Until that is cured—it will be by rest—she should not marry. I must tell you this: that in her present state it might kill her to have a child. She must lie down for hours every day, and for some months take life very easily. That's imperative. Medicine is of no use. I have told her the same."

These statements filled Kirk with trouble. Money was the immediate difficulty. This quite upset his recent decision to marry quietly, at once, and take rooms for a time. . . . But to live apart . . . where could they find the money?

He stood in silence for a few moments, then thanked the doctor, paid the fee, and returned to Marian. When outside he spoke to her.

"Now, dear, you'll have to go to the seaside. He says it might kill you if you married me now."

"Oh . . . Kirk . . . I can't bear to go away by meself,—and look what it would cost! We haven't the money!"

"It has to be done somehow, dear." He was thinking he might borrow money from Brough, after telling him everything needful.

"I suppose the doctor told you?"

". . . Yes, I'd told him we were going to be married."

"How much could you live on, dear, at Scarborough?"

Such a project seemed wonderful to Marian, and as they went along she thought hard.

"Ten shillings for my room now and eight when the season's over, and seven shillings for food. It would cost seventeen or eighteen shillings, Kirk . . . and I've got enough clothes for some time . . . But I couldn't bear it, to be all that way off . . . and you look so poorly yourself, Kirk."

"Why! then we can do it, dear!" cried Kirk, quite relieved. "I can live easily on a pound! It's going to be done! so you need say no more!"

"Oh, Kirk, it is good of you!" she squeezed his arm.

"No, no, it isn't, dear; it's just our bad luck; you would do it just the same for me, I know, if you could, if it had arisen. Besides it will make me happy to know you are away from that place for ever and no longer suffering."

She squeezed his arm, very happy that he so loved her. She spoke hopefully.

"Then when I'm better we'll be married! and live in rooms! until we save up enough for our own home, Kirk."

A fortnight later Kirk saw Marian off.

She had been better, but now was much worse, for she had let herself be stung by Dinah into another week's work at the mill.

Kirk with much concern saw her leave, for she could walk but slowly, and leaned forward with an anxious look upon her face. To save expense he did not go with her, but she

knew some one at Scarborough who kept a boarding-house, and they expected her. She greatly felt this parting from her home, and at the moment of leaving she quite forgot the unpleasantness of the past week, when Mrs. Gisburn and her sisters had cried shame on her for going away at Kirk's expense. That which troubled them so much was the scandalous appearance of the act. Whatever would Bruside say? Every one knew they were not rich enough to keep her at the seaside—so said Dinah—Besides, how could she—for shame!—go away at the expense of a young man to whom she was not married! But Marian, strengthened by peremptory letters from Kirk, declared that no one really knew whether they were well-to-do or poor. She pointed out that no one but themselves knew Kirk was to pay for her; so Dinah—finding Marian no longer to be moved by arguments—with an air of pride quickly told inquirers that her step-mother under a specialist's order had decided to send Marian away for a long rest. She was careful for the sake of appearance to accompany Marian, with Kirk, to the station. She made Jim also be there. He said an affectionate good-bye to his sister, who wept; but Dinah's last words to Marian were full of an asperity that made him laugh.

"Crying! You! why you're a lucky thing! with your great round red face!"

Kirk, seeing Marian's trunk safely in the van, heard nothing of this.

He returned to Holmroyd. He could himself have well done with a summer holiday. As he walked from the station how specially disgusting seemed this place. His gaze fell on the grease-covered setts where the steam trams waited between their uncouth and lumbering journeys. How he hated this smell of dye, this dust of dried dung that drifted along the pavements and collected in the stone gutters, that blew up in the hot and cold air and filled the eyes and nostrils. And to-day the attenuated river was all sickly pink, and steamed; the dull and smoky sunshine rested on drying banks

of foetid river-slime. The streets were full of be-shawled women and pale greasy men, all hastening back to work; and the noises of mill-sirens, of clogs, of harsh accents, and of massive horses drawing lorries through the tortuous iron streets, dinned in his ears.

Marian, never before so completely separated from her relatives, suffered a childish but trying loneliness. After a few weeks she wrote to Kirk that she could not much longer bear to be away. She had evaded his constant questions about her health. Nearly every day he wrote to her in order to keep her spirits up, and make her feel she was in close touch with him; but she yearned to come back. In August, after anxious financial considerations,—for Marian found she could not live on less than twenty-four shillings a week—Kirk determined that a visit from himself would make her more content. So he obtained leave for a week-end, and arrived at Scarborough late on Friday night. This seemed to revive Marian more than all her month's stay, but she was lamentably weak, and to Kirk she looked more delicate than before she went away. Yet this delicacy of her body was strangely helpful to Kirk, for the girl was subdued, far more gentle, more refined physically and mentally, than she had ever before been to him. His first love seemed genuinely and spontaneously to return, like the last tender days of sunshine before winter.

During this brief visit he was everything to her that any girl could wish. He had forbidden her to see him off on the Monday morning, for he had to leave at half-past five. He kissed her good-bye, and good-night, and she promised to be brave, and remain at Scarborough. But she arrived at the station early next morning in good time to see him off. He thought it touching unselfishness. There was scarcely a soul about, so he put his arms round her and kissed her good-bye. As he leaned out of the window he waved his handkerchief until her face, smiling through her tears, became indistinguishable.

CHAPTER LI

ARCHDEACON ROKEBY was the Vicar of Holmroyd. His opinion of this great town coincided with Kirk's, but more complacently, for the living was worth well over three thousand a year. He was a markedly cultured man, he had been head master of Marlborough, and had written several books on geometry and conic sections. He it was who delivered those original and celebrated lectures that caused such protest among the low Churchmen but so refreshed and reinvigorated those of wider mind—the host of Christian people who long had been troubled by the problem of the gospel—those who had asked themselves in vain, “How could our God of Love exact the harrowing sacrifice of the Christ—His own Son—merely to appease his wrath with man? Merely to appease His irritable revengeful wrath against His own creation!—A creation whose past, present, and future lay always open and before Him!”

Archdeacon Rokeby first it was who preached the new healing and so clear doctrine:—The death of Christ was but an incident; the great and mighty object of Christ was *at-onement*, to be *at one with men*, to give them for ever a sublime example of how human fellow-men should live. The “*at-onement*” was a false word directing to a quite wrong idea, one that obscured the omnipotent love of God. Let it be forgotten. The enemies of the Church—declared he—had justly shown the incongruity of “*atonement*.”

“Meanwhile, men and women, nay! even children,” said he, “have given up their lives unselfishly, not for the whole human race, but for even a single fellow-being. But Christ alone has ever given such sublime precept and example.”

The Archdeacon was powerful, well-connected, and all

knew this important living was but one of the last of his steps towards a bishopric. His traducers had not prevailed against him. In fine measured English he had shown them how false was their assertion that he undermined the doctrine of the Eucharist.

He was a spare tall man who carried himself grandly, and often he might be seen walking in the town, dressed in the most shabby well-cut garments and wearing the most faded buttoned leggings that Kirk had ever seen, most especially on the legs of an ecclesiastic. But his hands were perfect, his linen spotless, his gaunt face well shaven. The archdeacon accepted with dignity the material good gift of God, his three thousand four hundred a year. But in his private bureau was a scheme already agreed upon with the Charity Commissioners that would divide up two-thirds of this fat living among the poor curacies of the district—after he himself had gone.

Kirk's function it was to ravage the archdiaconal garden, by laying through it three parallel lines of enormous iron pipes; for no other route would serve, and Parliament and the archdeacon had given sanction. Here one morning the noble-looking spare man first made Kirk's acquaintance. He smiled as he approached, and spoke with what Kirk thought the most beautiful and cultured voice of man that he had ever heard. Involuntarily the younger man raised his hat and bowed. The archdeacon offered his hand.

"Ah . . . good-morning, you are Mr. . . .?"

"Clinton—I'm Mr. Gifford's new engineer."

"Indeed? Indeed? Then you take Loreburn's place? Did you know him?"

"No."

"A delightful fellow! a charming fellow! We were truly sorry when he left us,—but you? Do you like this town?"

"No. I think it horrible . . . But your garden is an oasis, and so well cared for, I shall see that the least possible disturbance is made."

"I feel sure you will: I am prepared for it now; but I must show you a few things I had arranged with Loreburn . . . all those rose-trees—poor things! they do not flourish in this air—we thought they might be re-set along that wall; let us go there."

They walked across the wide lawn.

"It looks South . . . as I think we do ourselves, sometimes."

"Yes, *I* do!" responded Kirk, touched and delighted by the strange remark.

"What school were you at, may I ask, Mr. Clinton?"

"Severnly."

"Oh! Then you were there in Warleigh's time? And then you went to Cambridge, of course, being an engineer. I myself was at Oxford."

"No, I was less fortunate—I went neither to Oxford nor Cambridge."

For a moment surprise filled his companion, but as he looked at Kirk's refined face he put aside his feeling of less warmth, and continued.

"Then at Severnly you would belong to the modern side?"

"No, it had not been introduced then. I did Latin, thank goodness."

"Ah! you read? You love your books?" Rokeby stopped and gently put his hand on Kirk's arm. "Do you know, you remind me very much, so very much, of some one . . . I cannot think who . . ." finished he, dreamily, and walked the young man on towards a large greenhouse. "And *no* mathematics at Severnly?"

"Oh, just the usual veneer!" said Kirk, laughing a little.

"And whose geometry did they inflict on you?"

"I think it was old Todhunter."

"Ah . . . ah, a very, very extraordinary chaos—to my mind. I must give you one of my 'Geometria.' Loreburn told me it was most helpful to him."

"What! have you written a geometry, Sir?"

"I have written three, but, really, *homo unius libri*."

"Thank you, I should much like your work."

"Nothing! nothing! *labor ipse* . . . you remember?"

Kirk had long forgotten. He did not reply.

". . . When passing the greenhouses, I want you to exercise care in going beneath the hot water pipes. I put them down a year ago—that is their line, they are some three feet deep, enshrined in a timber trough and saw-dust. They come right across from the kitchen. My last under-gardener let the fire go out, upon a frosty night—and I lost many precious orchids . . . hence this more stable means of heating . . . Do you like flowers? . . . Then come in!"

Kirk, bending over a large pot of heliotrope, exclaimed—"Oh! How delicious!"

The tall ecclesiastic took a pair of rusty scissors and severed him a spray; while Kirk thought with happiness, "I'll send this to Marian."

"Of course you are a Churchman?"

". . . I go to Church of England, sometimes, but my people are what I suppose you . . . you would call Irvingites. I am not anything very decidedly. . . . I am unable to believe in many things. I am agnostic."

"You are troubled by science of to-day? A phase! it will pass! I myself was not ordained until forty years of age. I too had doubts. You must come and hear me next Sunday evening, I may be able to help you. I preach that evening upon the Flood. Do you know any one here? No? . . . Yes, there are few people here who, I think, would be harmonious with you, . . . few that one cares . . . ah, to be *intimate* with. Perhaps you will come in to supper Sunday? and meet my wife?"

"Thank you. I shall come with pleasure."

They went outside into the cold-seeming air, and there met an old thick-bodied man, the verger. Among many duties he transcribed music for the organist, and also he firmly controlled the under-gardener at the vicarage. He had listened

to many vicars, and to some peculiar extent he had acquired their vocabularies, but not their accent.

"Good-morning, Mesther Clenton, arv joost been lukeing ovver t'warl meself!"

They all three looked over, to where Kirk's men were wheeling earth up a very inclined plank-way.

"Me hey!" exclaimed the verger, impressively. "Yon's a steep graduate ye've got yon, Mesther Clenton!"

Kirk and the archdeacon laughed and withdrew.

"I would not correct him for the world. He is a source of infinite joy to my wife, who employs him multifariously,—graduate indeed! a steep graduate!"

On the Sunday evening Kirk was received graciously by Mrs. Rokeby. He enjoyed himself in the large dark room, lighted only by an old seven-branch silver candlestick, one like those in pictures of the temple at Jerusalem. Kirk had been introduced to a curate, and to the Rokebys' niece and nephew who were on a visit. The very small boy was rosy-cheeked and had blue eyes full of mischief. His sister was the daintiest dark-eyed little creature, in very short skirts. Kirk quickly made friends with these children, and they were talking both at once to him when supper was announced. It seemed they stayed up to supper on Sundays. Kirk stooped slightly and offered his arm to the little girl, and she took it with a great air, then danced two or three steps and shook her dark curls, as they advanced. Then she was staid again, looked up in his face and said with extreme gravity,

"Don't you think the archdeacon is a *dear*?"

Kirk laughed very much, and she laughed as well. She sat upon his right, and the small boy took position on his left.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Rokeby, "*this* is your place, Mr. Clinton!"

"But Mr. Clinton brought me in, Auntie."

"May I please stay here?" asked Kirk, much amused; and

he remained between the children. He perceived they had power over these childless ones.

The old silver and the flowers pleased the eyes of Kirk. The silver candlesticks, seven-armed, provided light.

Presently the two children laughed so much that Mrs. Rokeby gently reproved them, and smiled at Kirk.

The little girl heaved a sigh, made an adult despairing gesture, very funny, and panted,

"What *can* I do, Auntie! when he *will* say it's a 'goly stingle-tack!' " And the curate almost choked himself, coughing till red in the face.

"I am afraid I am somewhat to blame," said Kirk, grinning whimsically.

After supper the children went to bed and the elders sat round the drawing-room fire, for even in July Holmroyd is a chilly place at night.

Kirk evaded skilfully his own history, nor was he more than lightly questioned. He told Mrs. Rokeby of Cirenhampton and the Lucys, and they talked much of books. On this latter subject she drew him out. The archdeacon conversed ostensibly with his curate, but listened mostly to his wife and Kirk.

Kirk had the good sense at ten o'clock to bring the conversation to an end, while at its best; and Mrs. Rokeby told him at parting,—

"You must come again, Mr. Clinton; we are so pleased to have made your acquaintance; it will be the only nice thing resulting from the dreadful mess you intend making in our poor garden!"

"My dear," said she, when Kirk and the curate had gone, "he will be quite an acquisition, quite a different temperament from Mr. Loreburn's, so reserved and shy, but not a bit *gauche*. I am quite sure he is the son of some very nice woman; he will tell us all about himself later, and, did I tell you? I did draw him out a little! he is the youngest Fellow of the Geological Institute, and is writing a thesis!"

“Emma! How you do chatter! No wonder the young man felt shy, as you say,—but yes; I did think, dear, you would like him. He is modest, very well-read for his years, and is fond of flowers, and these are real accomplishments in this day of small things . . . and the children liked him—a good sign, too. . . .”

Something had made the archdeacon feel a little sad. He was wishing that he too could have been with the children, as Kirk had been. He felt that he must be growing very elderly. He rang the bell to summon the servants for family prayers.

CHAPTER LII

MARIAN progressed but slowly. She had been away for three months. Living at Scarborough cost far more than they had anticipated. It left Kirk but eighteen shillings a week for himself. He found increasing difficulty in making ends meet. But he sent Marian no word of his position. He was in need of new boots, and the wet weather was arriving, but he bought shoes for they cost him only half the price of boots. For his prospective examination he required many expensive books. It seemed almost impossible to buy them, just at present. Rigid economy in living seemed the only course. He left his rather comfortable rooms because they were dearer than he could now afford. The whole population at Holmroyd was of the operative class. Cheaper rooms had been most difficult to find, but Kirk had found them, and he now lived in a street of workmen's cottages, in the poorest and most squalid circumstances he had ever known. He had a small bedroom to himself, but shared the dirty little front room downstairs with a young man who touted from door to door for a tea-merchant. This Jewish young man ate noisily, was grossly content, and persistently tried to patronise and be familiar with the austere newcomer. Kirk's temperament could only present to this person the same civil, reserved, but irritating front, day by day. Their meals were brought in separately upon trays. They received solely and specifically what they paid for. The house was managed by two old maids, one fat and the other lean, both dirty and slatternly. Kirk soon discovered that they drank, and hence they were in poverty. The silver-plating had almost disappeared from the brassy spoons and forks,

the knives had worn to half their length, the yellow handles were always greasy or sticky. Kirk several times shewed the lean woman the dirt between the fork-prongs; before her eyes he held his bread, soiled by cutting with a filthy knife; and he pointed out other offensive facts. But his complaints were without avail. Very soon she lost her temper and spoke violently before the tea-man—

“If it ain’t good enough for you why don’t you leave? Mr. Samuels never grumbles.”

Kirk’s pale cheeks flushed hotly, but he held his peace. Things nevertheless were cleaner for a few days, and then became as bad as ever. Kirk arranged different times for his meals in order to avoid the noisy eater, and to escape the feeling of contamination and disgust that this young man invincibly gave him. The two old unfortunates refused to serve his meals upstairs unless they received considerable extra payment. This he could not give. Breakfast consisted of one theoretically fresh egg, always boiled either too hard or too little, or it would be execrably scrambled with stale butter. In addition, a certain allowance of bread and butter was supplied. He found tea the better of the two inferior English breakfast liquids they supplied. On Sundays a few square inches of bacon were added. His daily dinner of two courses was at one o’clock, and its composition was a scrap of “steak” three-fifths of an inch thick, or one three-quarter-inch slice of codfish, sometimes boiled, sometimes dried to a ridiculous diameter, or it might be a “chop” from one of those attenuated blackened moorland sheep. The potatoes were seldom entirely eatable; and when good, Kirk theorised there must have been no bad ones for sale. The second course, of pudding, usually came in the smallest size of pie-dish, and Kirk had compared the contents with the hardened floor of lava at bottom of a crater, surrounded by blackened walls of burnt milk. Only those who have lived poorly—after living well—know how utterly distasteful food can be made, and how all leavings of the markets are daily bought

and eaten by the indigent. "Tea" included four unvarying items,—tea, jam, bread and butter. Kirk felt positive it was not butter; and "the preserve" was known to himself as "jam-trifle," for somehow there seemed always dead flies and bits of string to be discovered and rejected. It is but fair to mention that the flies were not native to the jam, for the vicinity of a large mews kept the rooms thickly supplied with black and festive flies. At nine o'clock or so the supper entered, often rather unsteadily. It comprised a jug of water, some bread, the supposed butter, and a little—very little—hard inferior cheese. Kirk always wiped the tumbler with care; and always it was needful to clean the black dirt out of the fork-prongs; and, by the end of the week, there was some difficulty to find a fresh unsoiled corner on the pocket-handkerchief-like serviette.

At first was felt by Kirk a most genuine hunger, for since his illness his body had demanded a full supply of food. But after some weeks habit prevailed and he grew used to a small amount of food.

He had spent hours in seeking some abode less wretched, but in vain. No one took in lodgers, every one worked at the mill. He found other rooms—but all were too dear. He was forced to hold himself much in reserve with the fellow-members of Mr. Gifford's staff, for he could not return their hospitalities. Once or twice under observation when going home he had turned off in a wrong direction, for he was ashamed of the locality of the house. He had been obliged also to give up smoking, but the staff believed Kirk desisted of his own choice. The occasional dinings out at the Rokebys and the Giffords were veritable feasts for Kirk, both physical and mental. The Rokebys sent their notes to the office. Kirk had asked them to do this,—“Then I shall be sure to receive any note quickly.” But these miserable subterfuges were depressing.

In the evenings since his illness he had worked a little at the geological paper, and now at last it was complete. Pro-

fessor Rally had gone through the proofs—correcting, advising, discussing, searching for references—and now the precious thing had gone to the Secretary, who passed the English and gave the thesis to the Referees; they, in turn, reported to the Council that the matter was original, and suitable for reading. The day was fixed. Kirk was glad that he had paid the annual subscription early in the year: until next April he need pay no more. He waited now, until the date for reading was very near and then he wrote a careful letter telling the Professor that he regretted deeply he could not possibly be in London on that date; and, under the unfortunate circumstances, he asked the Professor to read the paper in his stead.

Professor Rally wrote back in haste.—He thought it a great pity, a very great pity, a great opportunity would be lost, but if it were *absolutely unavoidable*—though he could not *really* understand *why*,—why, then, of course, he would be glad to present Kirk's work to the Institute. It was an important contribution to come from one so young; it was most lamentable that Clinton could not re-arrange his work, and take such an excellent chance of becoming more known in scientific circles, it was become impossible now to alter the date, no time was left, he had been to see the Secretary—but he hoped earnestly that Kirk could come.

Rally delivered the paper—and Kirk's feelings were very mingled as he read the old man's letter written the day after the event, in which he told Kirk of the high praise given, and of kind words said by Lapworth, Geikie, Prestwich, and other great men.

But this deprivation was all for Marian's sake, thought Kirk, and there was no *real* sacrifice in these hardships. It could not possibly be helped. Thank goodness it was past and gone! even postage had cost him far too much.

But not yet was the affair closed. A week passed and then Kirk received word that the Council considered his work of

sufficient import to be included in the Journal. This delighted him; he sat and thought a moment, for he knew that a large percentage of papers read before the Fellows were not considered worthy of this honour. Eagerly he read on. The Secretary asked how many spare copies Kirk wished to have bound and printed, adding that, as usual, twelve copies would be given *gratis*. Would he please reply by return of post and give his order as the litho-stones were required at once for other plates? It was usual to send the money with the order direct to the publishers. He enclosed the address. The Institute took no responsibility for private copies. They would cost in this case only two shillings each, for fifty copies and upwards.

Kirk reluctantly was compelled to write that he required no spare copies. He felt hard hit by this deprivation. It did not occur to him to tell some friend of his position, and obtain a small loan. In a few days, he received a second and very different letter from Professor Rally:—

“I am astonished and grieved to hear from Blackdales that you have ordered no copies of your work! and that he has actually cleaned the stones! We *all* want extra copies. You really seem to have no appreciation of your own work. Considering the great pains I have taken for you, Clinton, I feel that I am extremely ill-used. *I cannot understand your action, and now it is too late.* It will fully repay you to have the whole thing done again by the publishers, and I have told them to keep the originals and all your drawings pending your reply, which I fervently hope will be in the affirmative. You are clever, Clinton, but you must avoid all eccentricities such as this. I am exceedingly surprised. I really shall not know what excuse to make for you to people, for the paper will be asked for all round, and, of course, you should have presented the copies yourself to all the other men who speculate in your field.” And much more followed. A few days

later arrived the twelve copies supplied gratis by the Geological Institute.

Kirk replied to Rally by sending six of his twelve precious copies. With them he sent a short note, telling Rally how sorry and grieved he was, and that the real reason of his action was extreme hard-upness. He had, unexpectedly, been compelled to save and spend every penny of late to help a sister. He sent one copy of his thesis to Marian, one to Mr. Lucy, and one to Mrs. Athorpe. On the first he wrote the words—magical to a young man—“With the Author’s compliments,” and those sent to Marian and to his aunt he inscribed “With the Author’s love.” But he knew he had missed a good step towards the Geological Survey, and he feared he had lost the Professor as a friend. Kirk told Marian not a word of this humiliation. It could do no good, and would be most unkind. . . . “Indeed it might force her to forego her cure,” thought he.

It was at this time she wrote asking him to go to Bruside; for her step-mother had written to her, and was very troubled. Mrs. Gisburn wanted her to return at once, for folk said that Kirk had gone off, and would never come back, and Mr. Vosper had even asked if Kirk and she were married. Marian, rather home-sick, was inclined to obey. Kirk wrote a letter to stiffen her against returning, but promised to go himself to Bruside. On the following Saturday, carrying a small handbag, he walked there over the moors. He had little recollection of that walk, except that he was anxious and sorrowful and felt very tired towards the end, and he remembered how saffron had been the sky reflected in the lonely peaty pools, as he descended the high moorland above Bruside.

Unexpectedly he enjoyed this visit. He was glad to eat the good food at Mrs. Gisburn’s, thankful for the cleanliness and quietude, and for the clean soft bed in which he slept. On the Sunday he wrote Marian a long letter, sending her by request Mrs. Gisburn’s love, and pointing out to her

on his own account that those at Bruside were by now quite used to her absence. There was no need for her return. He had made a point of going to church morning and evening with Ruth and Mrs. Gisburn, who seemed content. He enclosed a pretty wedding-card of rough artistic paper—and a letter, both from Ted, who announced his approaching wedding. Ted apologised for short notice to the best man, but wrote that Kirk ought to feel specially complimented, for both Jeannie and himself had long selected him as best man. Ted further gave full particulars of trains; he wrote that the house would be so full of Jeannie's relatives that Kirk would have to sleep next door, but they knew old Kikkie would not mind that under the circumstances. Admiral Molyneux was at home and was coming to the wedding, the two Molyneux children would be bridesmaids. Kirk must write by return and acknowledge this letter. It was a fearful business getting married! Their father had written unexpectedly from Severnly, he accepted the invitation *and enclosed a cheque for a hundred pounds!!!* Wonders never ceased!

Kirk told Marian he had not yet replied, but that he must at once do so. He did not say what reply he intended. Marian perhaps had not considered—thought he—how very hard up must be her lover.

Kirk arose very early on Monday and walked back to Holmroyd. Mrs. Gisburn had no trouble to make him pack in his bag six fine eggs and a sultana cake.

On the evening of this day Kirk wrote Ted an affectionate and very difficult letter; in fact, he wrote three, tearing up the first two. At last, with great compunction, he wrote Ted what was not true:—that he, Kirk, could not possibly be away from his work for two days in the middle of the week, for he was still a newcomer, and Mr. Gifford a strict disciplinarian. He could only say how very very sorry he was, but he gave Ted his word that it was really impossible for him to come: and he added, "I am also very hard up indeed, after my illness, and now I am engaged I feel I have no

right to spend a single penny I can help, so I hope you will excuse and forgive my absence, and the breaking of an old promise. I do so hope it will not inconvenience you. I send my love to Jeannie, for she will soon be my sister. I wish you both the greatest of happiness and blessing. Ever your affectionate brother, Kirk."

He was surprised on Wednesday morning to find that the usual letter from Marian had not arrived, and when by Thursday morning no letter came he wondered if she had after all foolishly returned to Bruside and feared to write him. Outside, as he closed the house-door, the postman approaching held up his hand,

"Half-a-minute, sir!"

Kirk with relief received Marian's letter. He put the sealed envelope in his pocket and hurried to the office. He would read her letter when he had dealt with a few urgent things, for he was rather late.

Mr. Gifford had fine offices, and Kirk's table was of oak, and richly carved. The young engineer undoubtedly had position although he had not yet begun to make the money. In his large room were two pupils under his care, and, at this particular moment, as he opened Marian's thick letter, two tracers were also working in the far corner, finishing copies of some new plans. The room was quite silent. Kirk's back was turned to his assistants. He had just looked over their work, and had also seen his foreman.

He now opened Marian's letter. His eyes received the strange words,—

"A Briton knows when she is insulted. . . ."

What?—a copy of *what*? . . . She had written this to Jeannie?

As he read on, a sick faintness overcame him. He sat motionless, clutching the letter, his face disfigured, deathly. A bitterness unspeakable was being born in him. The absolute death of the ideal is always an atrocious torture. After a

time he drew to himself a piece of paper and wrote in pencil:—

“DEAR MR. GIFFORD,

“I feel very unwell to-day and am obliged to go home, and I beg you will excuse my attendance. I have instructed Edwards.

“K. CLINTON.”

What in her dark ignorance had Marian done to her lover?—while he spent his body and his soul for her?

For two days she had brooded on the fact that she was left out of the invitation. She had secretly believed all along that she would go to this wedding. *How dare he*, Kirk, think she was not good enough! This was her first interpretation. Mortally hurt was her pride. They had very likely written privately to Kirk! A fierce jealousy and resentment worked in her blood. “Ah!”—thought she, in tears,—“I’m not even good enough to be asked to the wedding with Kirk—and it’s my *right*. . . .”

But she would stick up for herself! They should know what she thought of them! And Kirk,—it was *cruel* that he had not written back and told them how they had insulted her! If he thought she was not good enough for him, she could not marry him.—She felt crushed by utter despair.

An evil impulse, a mad resentment, a possession of the devil, filled her. She seized the pen and sat down. She wrote a fierce note to Miss Mackenzie—How dare she invite the man she was engaged to without asking his fiancée? “But a Briton knows when she is insulted, and you can think what you like of me, but you’re no lady or you wouldn’t do such a cruel thing to me. But you shan’t play your cruel tricks without people letting you know they know what you are,” etc., for two pages.

While the evil mood lasted she wrote sadly and resentfully to her lover, and accused him of being ashamed of her, of not loving her, and she wrote that if he went to the wedding, then she would know he did not truly love her, and that

she could not marry him. She would rather die. At this point she paused. But the faint movement of good sense failed. She wrote on—"I seem fated to unhappiness." And to herself she thought,—“I wish I'd drowned meself long ago. I feel that ill and that miserable.”

Her next few days were most acutely unhappy. Many times she thrust away the wish to write again and say she had done, what she had done, in a bad temper. On Sunday an envelope came from Kirk. All it contained were postal orders for twenty-four shillings. But her pride and ignorance were stronger in the balance than her love, and they conquered her. In painfully offended vanity, in sullen despair, in great depression of mind—she began to gather her few belongings into the trunk he had bought and given her. When she got home she would send back everything to him, and work herself to the grave—but first she would repay him every penny he had spent upon her.

Kirk did not know that there are two kinds of jealousy; one, the meanest, rises from a gross clawing selfishness, but the other is a fear of loss of love. This fear especially torments uneducated men and women, who have been starved and lacking in their lives. Marian suffered from this defect of growth, and her hard life largely was responsible, but Kirk knew only of the green-eyed, mean-souled jealousy.

CHAPTER LIII

UPON the moors, mentally and emotionally distraught, unhinged, Kirk spent the first day and the night and the second day—walking, leaning on walls, sitting in old deserted quarries, lying and thinking, thinking by himself in remote hollows in the ling. At evening on the first day he went to an inn, "The Moorcock," the solitary house, in miles of waste slopes, that were blackened with sooted heather, or dirty-yellow where the rain of winter had exposed the dingy clays, shales and grits. Mechanically he made a meal of bread and cheese, and drank some beer. The sole visitor, he sat by himself until nine o'clock, and then went out again and walked or stood, or sat, aimlessly; and late in the night he dozed like an animal in a place he had been to in the day, and that he had found again by a blind instinct of his body. Fortunately, perhaps, the weather was unusually warm. He had been oblivious to all physical sensation, except that of hunger when he had seen and gone to the inn.

Differing only in degrees, there have been many temptings in the wilderness. Temptation is that desire to act against our innate sense of spiritual law. This knowledge of law, which is the "conscience," may be distorted, wrong, diseased; but inevitably, infallibly, we are "tempted" whenever we desire to act against that which our higher emotional, or mental, or spiritual nature, tells us is right.

That sense of honour, of chivalry, of the immutability of a promise, strongly nurtured in her children so long ago by Kirk's mother; that *love-ability*, gentleness and pity, that desire of self-sacrifice, developed in Kirk for good or ill—assuredly built into and integral of his character—these as it

were clung to him by the arm as he dragged them hither and thither. But the He, the Himself, what did He desire? He desired freedom from his promise, at the mortal hurt of Marian.

On the early autumn evening of the second day Kirk looked down on Bruside, and beheld the scene of his painful courtship. His physical vehicle, that body, in which resides closest those powerful materialities, those passions that grow fainter in our slow upward way "from species to beyond species,"—that vehicle, his body, was temporarily much weakened.

"I forgive you, poor Marian, because you are not a man, because I cannot take advantage of your weakness. You have bitten me, and returned me evil for good, but I cannot watch you drown. Nor . . . if I were free, have I any wish to live. *I am not . . . in all my future . . . I am not. . . .* The desire of life is dead in me. It is less painful to go on than to desert her. One of these two will then be happy . . . the other could not be more unhappy, do what he might . . . and what she has done has not released me."

He slowly tore up her letter, and with his heel scraped a hole. He put in those bits of paper covered with their black marks, drew the rocky soil over them, and replaced the heavy stone he had raised.

Numbed in mind and body he sought the inn. To take food was the first act in the new etiolated life: and, revived a little, he slowly made his way back to Holmroyd. He had ten-pence left in his pocket. He took a penny fare on the steam tram and reached the General Post Office in time to telegraph Marian:

"Remain where you are. I have done what you wish."

He had not yet done this, but in his dejection and resentment of his fate it was not so difficult. He slept till late on Sunday morning, and in his bedroom tore open Mrs.

Athorpe's letter and his brother's three-day-old letter. Folded with Ted's handwriting, he drew from the envelope Marian's frightful letter to his brother's sweetheart. He read what they said, but it did not affect him at the moment as might be thought. Cynically he smiled in his isolation.

"Ah, how little you two know of life and misery! you have never been put to the torture."

Ted wrote in anger. Jeannie had been most wantonly insulted, most abominably slandered. He presumed Kirk knew his fiancée had written to Jeannie, and he returned her letter. He and Miss Mackenzie had never thought, nor even imagined, that of which Miss Butterworth accused them. They had clearly understood that Kirk and she were economising. Hence they had asked only Kirk. If he could not come, he, Ted, could not easily forgive it, all their plans were quite upset; he must telegraph his reply. He hoped Kirk would have no more to do with such a girl as Miss Butterworth. The whole affair was utterly beyond his comprehension.

Thought Kirk, "This is best. As I am to look after Marian, it is best to be cut off from people who could not understand our fate."

Bitterness and misanthropy is a common refuge of men sorely wounded in love. Like animals, they desire to be solitary in their anguish, and to hide themselves.

Kirk now deliberately put forth the knife to sever that lifelong affection between himself and brother. He wrote:—

"DEAR TED,

"I am aware of the action of the girl whom I intend to marry. You will hear no more from me. I regret you are so inconvenienced. Good-bye.

"K. CLINTON."

He sent a copy of this note to Marian, with a few words, excusing himself for not writing more to her; he was much occupied, he hoped that she was now satisfied. The letter

she had written to Miss Mackenzie he enclosed. It had been returned to him. He hoped she, Marian, saw the importance of her action, and was satisfied with the results: they would be lasting.

Marian replied affectionately, she wrote that she had never meant for a moment to cause a break between him and his brother, because she had always believed they were *fond* of each other. Who *she* blamed was Miss Mackenzie. She had had a queer dream about her, in which she saw the girl was being married, and when herself was arriving with the other guests, Miss Mackenzie held her arms up and seemed to push her right back; she had to go, until they came to a well, and the girl made her look down it, "and in my dream-book a well means knowledge. I know she's got a spite against me. She'd have liked to have taken you away from me, Kirk."

. . . "Curse everything! What matters anything? except duty . . . I suppose," thought Kirk, as he read this.

By December Marian was so much recovered that she was able to come home. Kirk before allowing this made strict conditions with Mrs. Gisburn and the sisters. Marian was not to go to the mill; she was to help keep house with her stepmother. He would pay fourteen shillings a week towards her expenses. This latter was demurred to, but Kirk insisted as it gave him a strong hold. The girl came home looking wonderfully well, fresh, and young.

Kirk was to come over once a fortnight. She had not seen him for three months and was surprised and much disturbed by some extraordinary change in him. She observed it silently. His good looks had largely gone. He was extremely thin and pale, his eyes seemed deeper in his head, he had a set and fixed expression, especially about the mouth. He seemed very much older, and was taciturn, dull, and he seldom looked at her, very seldom kissed her, yet treated her the same in his attentions. But he never spoke of love, or read

to her. He rarely smiled, and when he did so it was cynically. Yet he was invariably gentle with her. She felt anxious about his health. Standing with her broad shoulders turned to Mrs. Gisburn—her hands upon her small and round waist—she spoke one day of Kirk's looks.

"It's Kirk that ought to be at the seaside, mother."

"That's what we think, Marian, my lass. But we're all afeart t'oppen our mouths now, you're both that tetchy and brabble. There's a change come i' this house!"

"He's gone so different, mother."

"Why don't ye do some work, my gurl! and help your man to get things you want? He's gotten' too much on his shoulders. He's nobbut young. Younger than thee, an' gentlebred. Yon does naught but brood and brood, and wark and wark. He's fair neshed and dull. . . . Times, Marian, o' late, ar've wished offen t'lad had never seen thee. . . ."

"I wanted to go to mill, but you know he'd not hear of it."

"Thee mun go wi'out letting him know, and do thi fair share!"

"If I do I should have what I earn? if you have what he pays?"

"Ay, ye can take it and welcome, my lass, we shall be glad to see ye married, Marian, we thinks better to ye than ye seem to believe, though we're your own kith."

And so, without Kirk knowing, Marian went once more to the mill. He remained a month longer in his miserable lodgings, saved a little money, and began to suffer from excessive insomnia. Drunken yellings and quarrellings often awoke him and prevented sleep, and nearly every "operative" in the town possessed a flea-bitten unhappy dog. Poor dogs were they that knew not of trottings in clean roads, pushings through dewy hedge-bottoms or scamperings over delicious grass. Long's excellent rabies order was in full force, but the poor dogs suffered much, temporarily; for unless chained up, or led in leash, every dog was muzzled. The noise at night

became an agony to the jaded nerves of Kirk; and each morning he awoke unrefreshed after a few broken hours of sleep; but his youth and recuperative powers were yet to stand much buffeting. In his heart he considered all this physical misery a part of the eternal unhappiness of life. By such as himself it was a condition unescapable. He saw that nearly all men's faces were stoic, resigned, sullen, calloused, dulled; and who was he that he should be excepted?

In January Mr. Gifford increased Kirk's salary to £130; and Kirk, no longer able to endure life with the tea-man, returned to his old rooms, for happily they were vacant.

CHAPTER LIV

IN late February when at Bruside, walking with Marian in his customary pretended cheerfulness, his habitual simulated looking-forwardness,—Kirk was questioned by her.

“Kirk, does your aunt write just the same?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Does she know why you didn’t go to Cheltenham?”

“Yes.”

“But you didn’t tell her?”

“No. Why talk of that, Marian?”

“. . . Only this once, Kirk, I’ll not ask you agen . . . but I’ve wanted to know so . . . was it Ted told her?”

“My brother? . . . I presume it was. Let us drop the subject.”

“Told her about what I wrote?”

The girl asked this very anxiously, but Kirk did not reply.

Recently she had told Jim about her grievance, and was astounded, frightened, and even conscience-stricken by his extreme astonishment, vexation, regret, hurt pride, and prophecy of the result. Jim had been more disturbed than Marian ever before had seen him, and his feelings were communicated. After a silence of stupefaction, he had exclaimed—

“Ay! ye fool! ye utter selfish fool! what think they’ll think o’ thee *now*? and of all of us! Ay, you’ll never see any of them at *your* wedding, my fine lass! Yes, and if it had not been *him*, he’d have brokken off with thee! It’s a miracle to me, Marian, that you’re still engaged! By God! *Yon* lad’s onselfish if ever a man wur! . . . It meks me feel that sad-like. . . . Eh, Marian, Marian, how *could* thee do it? Ar’m that ashamed of thee. It meks me fair cringe, to think of

what thee wrote! . . . Why, t' lad must be a fool! or a saint, to keep on with thee. Tha't none worthy o' yon lad. Nay. I'm ash-*ermed* of us all. Ay, he thinks he will! but he'll never forgive thee this. I know yon better than thee; be careful, be careful, my wench . . . and after all that he's done for thee. . . . So tha's coot him off from them he looves! Ar doubt or he'll never come back one of these fane ders . . . and who could blerme him? Not me!"

Jim left Marian gone pallid with fear, her ignorant pride greatly shaken, but with her fear increased. She was ashy pale, for she could not bear even the thought of losing Kirk, for by now he was built into her very heart and soul. A fierce hatred and great unreasoned fear of Jeannie lived on in her. That girl wanted to take Kirk from her, to persuade him not to marry her, *that* was what it was. *That* was what that dream meant.

Kirk and Marian walked on a hundred yards in silence; there was no one about, they were among rough pastures. Her arm was in his. Then in a low apprehensive voice she asked again, nervously unable to keep from the subject,

"Kirk . . . Did Mrs. Athorpe say anything about me?"

"Why do you ask?"—Kirk said it vexedly and nervously; he feared greatly to arouse the feelings of that time.

"Of course she wrote, a good deal; she does not understand you, or me. . . . And when you think of the terrible mistake you . . . we . . ."

The mere reference agitated him. He had not meant to utter his last words, but the words of his aunt were before his eyes, he saw the sentence: "We all think it dreadful for an engaged girl to make a quarrel between two brothers who love each other."

Marian withdrew her arm, though he tried to retain it. He looked at her; she was very pale.

"You *do* think I'm not good enough for you."

A strong pallor overspread her hard, suffering face, as she looked at her speechless lover. She turned, and then walked

away. He stood still, his back remaining towards her. It was near dusk, and the ground iron-bound with black frost. He stood still with his hands clenched before him. So it had come to this after all!

He was forced round to take a last look at her.

She had stopped, and he saw she was kneeling and crouching down as she had done on the day in the meadow, nearly two years ago. The strongest of all his feelings, the absolute unbearableness of seeing a woman, a girl, suffer through himself like that—re-triumphed.

He ran towards her.

The great anguish of the girl had quenched even her pride. He raised her silently and wiped her tears with his own handkerchief—yet knowing fatally that he loved her not. She was a child, a suffering girl put into his care, and he could never desert her.

Soon after this, Marian's physical weakness again declared itself. Kirk discovered she had been at the mill. But when he accused her she put into his hands twelve pounds. He was touched by this, but he flushed, for it is still the man's part solely, between lovers, to earn the money. He forthwith sent her to Scarborough, where again she began to recover slowly.

In May he visited her. She was so obviously and deeply in love with him that he had a keen paroxysm of the first fear and horror of deceiving her.

This return of fear came over him at the very moment he entered her room. Unexpectedly he had arrived by an earlier train. Marian jumped up and threw her arms round him and they kissed each other.

"Sit down, dear, you look ever so tired," said she, and he sat on the fore part of a low and long chair.

A minute later she seated herself on his knee, then pushed him gently till he lay well back, and she reclined upon him

and beside him, and lay with her eyes shut, her head on his breast.

Kiss her again at this moment he could not; it was too damnably false; but he stroked her hair; no, no, he no longer loved her, though he strove fiercely to shut the knowledge out. For dear life he held the door against the violent foe. During the next ten minutes his brain ached and his heart dried, in this last and worst conflict. He who pretended so cleverly—he who deceived a woman, even a dull woman, in her greatest knowledge—he fenced—as it were—with rigid muscles, his lightning strokes never ceasing—parrying his tremendous desire to confess, to give way. Not once did one faint suspicion reach Marian of this last terrible struggle. Never had his subtle brain shewed more skill—but what of exhaustion?

He made laughter, gave her caresses while his heart stifled, and she gazed into his eyes and serene face. What he truly feared was the powerful telepathic vibration of his feelings; these indeed had sometimes faintly reached Marian—as in the field that day—while he deceived her mind; and at one time she had wondered extraordinarily why she often liked him away better even than when he visited her. That had been so strange.

By any woman of but very little finer penetration, by any woman of less selfish, sensual, unconscious love, by any girl only a slight shade more sensitive, he would have been beaten and discovered long ago. She would have stood up in agony, wordless, have parted from him, and gone away to break her heart—but such a girl . . . would never have hurt him as did Marian. With a girl of his own caste such things from the earliest days would have been impossible.

But Marian reclined on her lover, and the warmth of her limbs penetrated through his clothes.

Driven to the last limit by the self-outrage upon his natural sincerity—his nerves in tumult and losing their control—he suddenly in despair released the passions of his sex. They

were very powerful, but well in hand. He had never before had such close contact with a woman's form. She demanded this passion, he saw it now, and he gave it quickly; he allowed himself to think of her semi-sensually, but with reluctance and super-self-loathing. He held her to himself. Now indeed was he abased.

But one second or two later! and ah! he must have groaned! cried out! pushed her heavily from himself! have told her, and said, "Let us both die."

With his left arm and hand he took her round the waist, and he kissed her on her mouth. His right hand was between her upper arm and her breast; she eagerly responded. She turned her head and kissed his neck many times. She pressed her warm limbs and form on him from head to feet. She locked her hand in his own and it sank in her bosom. Her face flushed, she smiled, and her eyes closed.

She lay still, fully satisfied that he loved her, and she murmured—

"You've never been so sweet and dear, Kirk . . . do you remember . . . I once said I wanted a man who'd kiss me and that . . . that's my idea of love . . . I've always felt miserable that after we're dead . . . we've no bodies . . . there'd be nothing sweet."

They remained in this attitude until the door suddenly opened, and Marian jumped up laughing and shook her clothes, and exclaimed,

"We *were* having a spoon! Mrs. Gillay."

"Ay, you young folks! You will have your fun!" Mrs. Gillay bustled about at a tremendous rate, setting the tea table like lightning. "Well, I say! have your fun! while you're young! but don't be foolish with it. Later on you'll have enough to do and think about, with a house, and babies, and what not!"

Marian laughed a good deal, but Kirk could not smile. He felt cheap and humbled. Yet he imagined he was doing right and honourably. He had kept his troth to Marian. All

they had now to do was to be married, and then it was over and finished. She was looking very well again. They would be married this summer. Then it would finish all this intolerable struggle.

From this day, when troubled terribly by his lost love and by his forced insincerity, Kirk allowed himself to think less vaguely of Marian's body, but always he reverted from this with distress. For he knew what true love was. These very thoughts revealed to him the strongly physical side of Marian's regard. He remembered again and again her words, once said laughingly but sincerely, "It was your legs that took my fancy first, Kirk."

"But she does love me with her being as well. Yes, she loves me—unfortunately, unhappily, and I cannot desert her."

CHAPTER LV

IT was the day before the wedding of Kirk and Marian. The house at Bruside was filled with bustle. The chairs and tables of the large parlour were covered with new hats and dresses. In the smaller room was the village seamstress, and one could hear the sewing-machine, starting and stopping. All the doors stood open for the June air to flow through. Much cooking proceeded in the large living room and kitchen of the old house. Rustlings and quick footsteps constantly sounded overhead. Ruth and Dinah had found substitutes for the mill, and Jane, the daughter of Mrs. Gisburn, would arrive in the afternoon, from Thirsk.

An old woman, very talkative and active, who always gave a hand with local wedding work, could be heard clacking in the kitchen.

To Kirk, his nerves at high tension, all this upset was offensive. Nor took he the least interest in these preparations of conventionality. His own arrangements for the honeymoon were complete. He found the present suspense very trying.

During the past two months, time had taken its effect. He had reconquered himself; he felt some genuine affection towards Marian and he preserved the feeling precious. Her unexpected delight and lightness at the approaching certainty of marriage penetrated him; but this made him feel again that he was unworthy. For obviously she loved truly and sincerely, within her narrow limits. But he . . . was merely a curious species. All he possessed was strength of honour. Over his own inconstancy he grieved silently and often: but he resolved more than ever that he would make

Marian happy, and for ever conceal his hopeless change of feeling. His health was better, and he threw off those vague besetting fears of the dark future, into which he had never seen. Of late he had lived carefully in the objective, kept a close watch on the expression of his own face, and become much more practised in the art of seeming cheerful. He felt strongly in his darker hours that all this human life was utterly trivial, that nothing we did really mattered,—except the duty just before us. One must go to bed and get up each day and live that day without outlook, and be philosophical, and in due course all would come to a blessed finality and oblivion—if one did one's duty.

But time dragged painfully this bright and sunny morning. Kirk had that uncomfortable sense of being in the way, the unpleasant feeling that men have in hat-and-corset shops, or during birth of their children—a vague sense of one led captive in the train of some woman-conqueror. It has been known to men when their partner in the dance was very lovely, well aware of it, and radiantly arrayed.

Nevertheless, Kirk was patient.

He rose next day in better spirits, feeling more balanced, calmer, and very determined. His sense of humour, long silent, unexercised, now came oddly to his help and the effect was immediate. A mood of calm recklessness, a reaction of youth, visited him, and he made semi-cynical fun with Jane—quite the liveliest member of the family, he found, and the house once more heard laughter in its rooms.

Marian had slept well. This morning she looked younger, rosy, and by Jane her heavy, pale, beautiful hair had been admirably coiffured.

"It's not lucky!" laughingly declared Jim, "for t' bridegroom to see bride before he's gotten to church." But Marian came to Kirk in her wedding dress, her veil thrown back, and before every one he twice warmly kissed her.

The morning was one of the most delicious of early sum-

mer. A slight warm rain had fallen in the night, but the clouds had dispersed again before dawn and now all was fresh and sweet. As Kirk drove down the long main street, he noticed the clean flags and setts, and through gaps in the rows of stone houses, he saw the distant moors all blue and brown, and the green pastures rising towards them. He caught glimpses of the sun sparkling in the short wet mowing grass of the sloping fields, and a lark was singing far away. Youth re-asserted the powers of hope and some stray fleeting bird of love flew into his heart to settle there awhile.

His best man was beside him. He was a young Irishman and had known Kirk for but a few months. He had come to Yorkshire to manage a new experimental mill for poplin: Kirk and he had met at the Martineaus', and had talked of music, and of work—for young De Courcy played the violin, and, also, he had invented an improved "Jacquard" loom.

Nearly every house-door had sight-seers. People were smiling at each other and then at Kirk as he passed down the road.

A romance moves us nearly all, whether we will or no. It is deeply interesting to the mass of men, and especially to all women. We all wish it happy fulfilment, we all wish the two adventurers good luck. We know nothing, as a rule, of their secret life and feelings.

We hope, we imagine, we believe, that we behold the veritable fulfilment of that pure and joyous love we all have heard of and desired, but so few of us have found; and if young, our hearts infallibly go out to them with warmth, and we say fervently within ourselves, "Good luck to them!" "God bless them!"

Marian drove down resplendent in her open carriage, drawn by a pair of really spanking greys. Jim accompanied her. Marian never had looked better, and the good in her heart to-day was at the surface. Men and women waved their hands as she went past; she sat erect, and she smiled all the time; but most folk were in church. It was packed.

Kirk remembered making the responses, loudly and mechanically, defiantly perhaps,—and then it seemed they were driving back together.

In the vestry Marian had signed “of full age.” Mr. Vosper had demurred slightly, it was a novelty to him, but Kirk had laughed gently and said, “You will find it quite in order.” The old clergyman would take no fees, and to Kirk he had whispered, “She is a most devout girl, Mr. Clinton, she has been in my school-class since she was a child. Marian is fit to enter any gentleman’s family.”

This momentarily hurt Kirk, but he had gratefully pressed Mr. Vosper’s hand, and his old love seemed to strengthen again and comfort him and exalt him.

He had accomplished his will. He had done his duty. This thought exalted him.

CHAPTER LVI

MARIAN somewhere had read of Guernsey and Sark, and from then had wished to spend her honeymoon in those distant islands. Besides, it sounded so grand. Every one in Bruside went to Scarborough, or Bridlington, or to more distant Blackpool or the Isle of Man,—but no one at Bruside had ever been to Guernsey. Then, too, a place where Kirk had never been was attractive to him. There would be relief in the complete change and the sense of great distance from the North. Expense when counted up tended to alter Marian's first desires; but Kirk had said, "A honeymoon comes once only, and you might as well have your wish, Marian. I propose we do go. It means merely that we will live in rooms a month or two longer."

Their luggage was labelled to Guernsey, via Derby and Weymouth. They left Bruside soon after two o'clock. The guard locked them in before they left the crowded little station. It seemed that half Bruside was assembled on the platform, and Kirk was touched, for as the train drew out all these northern folk cheered. In the carriage Kirk was very gentle and affectionate to his wife. They carefully removed all confetti and rice from each other's clothes and hair. He changed her seat, reminding her that she felt best when facing the engine. To-day his heart was lighter, his mind satisfied, he had done his duty, he forgot the past, and smiled affectionately at Marian, who was all rosy. He kissed her twice, and a few happy tears ran down her face. She took his hand and held it on her lap, and looked out of the window, thinking how good God had been to her.

When the train entered the cotton areas of Lancashire they passed the newly whitewashed roofs of weaving-sheds.

Marian pressed her husband's hand and said, "It was you got the whitewashing, Kirk. There's never been any one like you, Kirk, at my home."

At Birmingham they changed trains. Evening had come, and a fine sunset was promised in the west.

"Fancy, Marian, I had forgotten to tell you—fancy! we shall go through Severnly! I'll point everything out to you! But we shall go at an awful pace and not stop there. This very same train has run at the very same time, ever since I was a boy. It is the express I used to tell you of, that goes so fast, and is marvellously smooth-running, and will be very much better for your back than any other train that you have ever been in."

Kirk had tipped the guard and they were by themselves. Few passengers were travelling on the Tuesday.

The train ran faster and faster and rocked a little; Kirk began to know the country, and he stood up, looking out. Strange feelings and yearnings went through him. He turned to Marian but saw she was not really interested—

"Is your back hurting, dear?"

"It is a bit, Kirk, it's not much——"

He made her lie down; purposely for this he had hired a pillow, and with the rug he now made her very comfortable.

"You don't mind me looking out? These places—I know them so——"

"No, Kirk, dear, you look out! I'll shut my eyes a bit."

The train swept along at very great speed, and Kirk boyishly timed a few miles.

"Fancy, Marian! isn't it an awful pace! I make it seventy an hour! these last three miles."

Now they approached Severnly—he saw far ahead and recognised the great trees, he knew each by shape, he knew what lay beyond those broad darkening lammas-lands. The warm air they rushed through was scented with hay, and the

farmers' men and girls in the rich fields, hopyards and orchards, stood up to see the boat-express rock past. Some waved hands to him. Kirk waved back to them.

"Ah—they are *my* dear people!"

Far in that great woodland lay the Ravine! With his mother he had walked that very field-path. His eyes dimmed and he tightly held the door-ledge. Here he had spent his boyhood. The sweet memory choked him,—What was it he remembered that was so unreturnable in his life?

Lying on the edge of the plain of rich mowing grass—but far above it—from that spinney of graceful larches on the rounded hill the boy Kirk had often looked down upon and beyond the shimmering sea of grass, over many miles of deeply wooded country. The distant white-tented camp below sent up faint bugle-calls, the subdued r-r-up! of volley-firing would come regularly to his ears, mingled with the ceaseless undisturbed singing of the larks. Or more haply, one of the military bands would be at practise, playing low and sweet on a hot fair summer day, and like the listening boy, the players felt the inspiring beauteous land and sky, the richness of morning. To them also came an ecstasy—floating from the far limits of the endless seas of flowers and grass in which they were—and they played rapturously, so that the boy's eyes and soul had filled with trembling and intoxication of the spirit, that overcame him with sweet emotions inarticulate and uncontrollable.

Unexpectedly the train drew up at Severnly. The station, rather busy, looked just the same to Kirk. They had only altered the position of the bookstall.

He helped Marian to rise.

"Yes, I feel better now it's stopped." She moved her hat further on to the seat and smoothed her hair. They stood together, Kirk looking out above her head.

"Are you Mr. Clinton, Sir?" asked the guard.

"Yes."

"One minute! there's a gentleman been looking for you."

He went away quickly. Kirk saw his father coming, and for the first time it occurred to him that his father was very handsome. The guard unlocked the door and stood aside. His father stepped up lightly into the carriage.

"Is this your wife, Kirkpatrick?"

"Yes, father."

The elder man smiled courteously, took her by her upper arms and gallantly kissed her; he then gave her a choice rose.

Kirk shook hands with his father. He was puzzled and amused. Mary must have asked him to come and see them. . . . She must have said Marian was rather good-looking . . . he knew his father.

"Train going on now, Sir!"

Outside, Mr. Clinton said, "You wrote me nothing of your wedding, Kirk—or I should have sent a present—I have just bought a very good painting that you shall have. God bless you both."

"Isn't he an extraordinary man?" said Kirk, smilingly. "We may never see the present, Marian, he will very likely forget all about it, or put it off and off till he forgets."

"But wasn't it nice of him to kiss me like that?" And she smelt the rose.

"Yes, he can be a great man with the ladies, if he likes to be . . . he seems to have altered again."

At Bath they stayed ten minutes. Here many passengers awaited the boat-train for Weymouth. The new guard walked along, scanning the passengers, and he stopped when he saw Kirk, who had taken his seat.

"Are you through to Guernsey, Sir?"

"Yes," said Kirk, promptly producing the tickets.

"Would you mind having a young lady in with you, Sir? She's by herself, I said I'd put her in with someone going right through."

"Oh yes! all right!"—Kirk smiled at Marian, who assented.

A pretty girl of sixteen, very shy, who told them she was a Channel Islander, journeyed with them the rest of the way. She and Marian soon became friendly and at ease.

Kirk felt happy in looking after these two, seeing to the luggage, escorting them on board, finding seats for them, and booking sleeping berths. The future was a blank. He had made rapid progress in the art of living, minute by minute, in a narrowed consciousness.

They sat in deck chairs, for the night was still and perfect. Over the motionless dusky sea rose the full moon, enormous and golden. "The honeymoon," whispered Marian to Kirk. No one suspected they were on their wedding trip. Through looking after Marian for so long Kirk had acquired a husbandly manner that deceived.

The huge cliff-like peninsula of Portland, on their right, seemed to glide by them silently mile by mile. About one hour after the winking lights had died away upon the dark English shore, Kirk carried the young girl's rugs and things below, and committed her to the stewardess: whom he tipped, telling her to see the young lady was quite comfortable; but Marian greatly feared sea-sickness, and dare not go below, nor dare she eat. So Kirk wrapped her well up in the rug, in the deck chair. He put his overcoat on, and all night they remained on deck. For some hours they both slept.

Very early Kirk awakened. Glorious with sunrise was the sky. A homeward ship with every white sail set and full towered close at hand: she looked swanlike, serene, beautiful; she rocked very slowly and the gently parted water rippled from beneath her graceful bows. Nowhere showed another ripple—for the broad and tranquil bosom of the sea lay spread with slowly undulating changing sheens of silver, rose, and golden light—reflected from the splendours and the dazzling face of youthful Helios.

But Marian slept on, and Kirk, looking upon her, observed her pallor and fatigue, and felt a deep protectiveness. Presently she awoke and he persuaded her to eat dry biscuits and drink the hot coffee he had brought.

By half past eight they were being taken to their bedroom, in a most delightful and old-fashioned boarding-house. Visitors at this time of year were few in number. The wife of the proprietor, who, it was plain to Kirk, was a lady, opened a door that led from their large and pretty room into a little chamber.

"We use this as a dressing-room when we are not full. We thought you would like it."

"Thank you," said Kirk, and bowed slightly.

Mrs. Maigny left the room and closed the door.

Marian, never having had a dressing-room, made no use of this. Her husband knelt and unlocked the trunks and took things out and was about to stand up. After a moment of embarrassment Marian brushed aside her feelings with a kind of contempt. She was far too done up to trouble, and now dear Kirk was her husband.

Of the honeymoon only one more day remained.

The heavens were brilliant azure. Burning in the zenith stood the sun. The rocks in the sea, hundreds of isolate conical points, strangely pink of hue, showed stern and fixed; some were miles from land—bright pink rocks in a sea of pure deepest azure that slowly moved and dreamed, at lowest ebb—gorgeous and tropic as the proud Persian bird spreading in the noonday sun. Never before had these two looked on or imagined such a sea of colour. Near them the water changed to emerald, and then to amber, edged by the glowing whiteness of the curving sand.

But the multitude of sharply-pointed rocks, that stood far out amid the azure, were watchful, dreadful, warlike as spikes of brass on the burnished helms of motionless cavalry. They were menacing as fangs.

Kirk and Marian gazed silently upon this wonderful siesta of these countless tigers of the torridian sea.

Far out among those pale-pink fangs of rock—where they received the long oceanic swell—where the splendid azure water burst into a seldom and vanishing snowy foam, lay chained a sentinel of hoary iron that even in this blazing, still, breathless noon moved with unrest.

At long and slow unceasing measured intervals it rose, and as it sank again it breathed across the blue a deep and far-heard, most sorrowful “Ah. . . .” “Ah. . . .”

Here had come to Roquaine the newly married, and Kirk had brought a luncheon basket, with wine; and towels for bathing. He had come here in a calm mind—the deathly calmness that precedes typhoons—all his thoughts banished for the time—living from hour to hour in the present; drifting, living for once unconscious, in the sun’s glorious light and heat.

He had disturbed the crabs gently with his stick, for it pleased Marian so much to see them run, striking with their raised claws.

Now they were seated by each other, gazing out from beneath the shadow of a gnarled old tamarisk, that spread feathery boughs over the topmost granite pebbles of Roquaine—and that crying came from the sea, and came, and came, and Kirk began to think.

And all against her trembling will—to Marian came the memory of those dread moments she had felt, when she had verged by dullest intuition on the meaning of his strangeness.

These two human beings fell motionless and silent, and listened, each in their separate hearts. The young man’s hand crept to his heart and nerves, unknowingly he held his hand pressed against his heart.

Each foreboded, for each beheld in spirit the distant

shadow of the inevitable that approached them from beyond this lovely place and day.

A whole week had passed in which Kirk and Marian had remained at tension,—unchanged in their relations.

But Nature—frowning upon their disobedience—transcended their disharmonies, their spiritual and mental oppositions, and was obeyed.

Marian—far more than he—experienced the brief, novel, but tremendous passion-pleasure of the physical union—for his was darkly intershot and stressed by the intermingled lacking of those sweetest-in-life, wonderfully intimate emotions—of the soul and the spirit—so present and essential in the first, blest triple-consummation of a pair of warm, refined true-lovers.

The Mother-goddess, Nature—who is She but pure Divinest Law?—She for a brief spell had eased the mysterious polar tensions of the physical; but on these racially perverted ones—children of centuries and centuries of disobedience to Law—on these she could in nowise bestow her exquisite counter-joys of spiritual and mental consummation: and so, ceasing interest in her one-time worshipper—we see her smile, cynically but pitifully, at the sad and indurated falsities and bondages of human thought and law—

She passes on, eternal, punishing or blessing, seeking as ever for humans unclouded, balanced, clear-thoughted and heroic—worthy not in body only but in mind and spirit likewise, to fulfil her perfect beauty, loves, and heavenly inspiration.

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